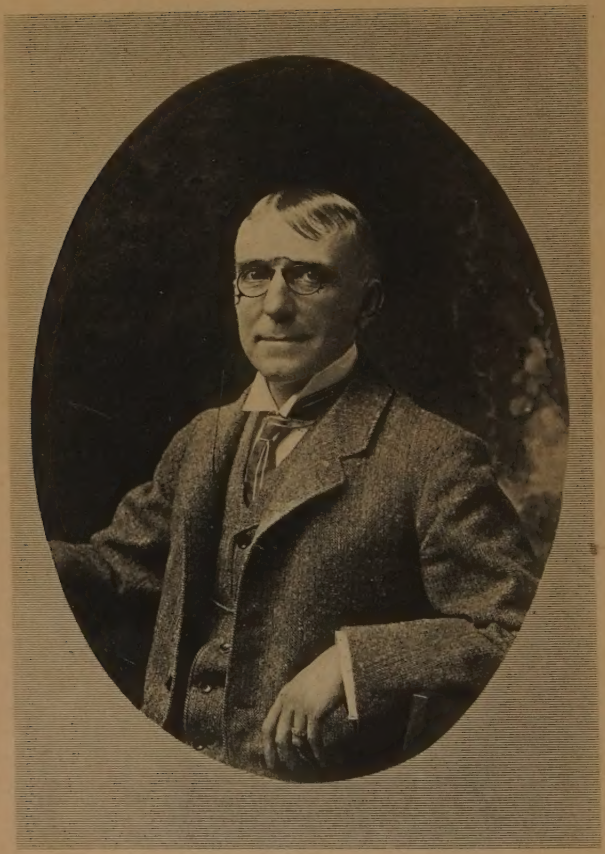
# THE WORKS OF JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

VOL. I



THE POEMS AND PROSE SKETCHES OF JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

# NEIGHBORLY POEMS AND DIALECT SKETCHES

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS · NEW YORK · 1901

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO THE HOMESTEAD EDITION

In arranging for the author's complete writings in this, The Homestead Edition, it has been found necessary to make some deviations from the order of the contents of his volumes as they first consecutively appeared and, in the same editions, are continued by their original publishers, severally,—The Bowen-Merrill Co., Indianapolis; The Century Co., New York; and Longmans, Green & Co., London. The titles of the two volumes, "An Old Sweetheart of Mine" (The Bowen-Merrill Co., Indianapolis) and "Old-Fashioned Roses" (Longmans, Green & Co., London), do not here reappear, but their contents are duly brought over and preserved in full in this edition. To the generous courtesy of both American and English publishers the author is additionally indebted, and so permitted to reshape, in rounded form, his verse and prose product entire—the base of all changes made

being simply in the interest of symmetry and the avoidance of repetitions peculiar to the novice's first brood of books.

No further word seems due or pertinent, at this new beginning and first volume, unless it be to emphasize the strictly conscientious intent of the real writer to be lost wholly in the personality of this book's supposed old Hoosier author, Benj. F. Johnson. Therefore the generous reader is fervently invoked to regard the verse-product herein not only as the work of the old man's mind, but as the patient labor of his unskilled hand and pen as well—and the whole of it thus reverently held unedited, save in simplest essential marks of punctuation,—these conditions only changing in his prose sketch, "An Old Settler's Story," which primitive chronicle is, for apparent reasons, retold as by a pleased listener to the originally impromptu narration.

J. W. R.

TO MY BROTHER
HUMBOLDT RILEY

## PREFACE

As far back into boyhood as the writer's memory may intelligently go, the "country poet" is most pleasantly recalled. He was, and is, as common as the "country fiddler," and as full of good old-fashioned music. Not a master of melody, indeed, but a poet, certainly—

> "Who, through long days of labor,
> And nights devoid of ease,
> Still heard in his soul the music
> Of wonderful melodies."

And it is simply the purpose of this series of dialectic studies to reflect the real worth of this homely child of nature, and to echo faithfully, if possible, the faltering music of his song.

In adding to this series, as the writer has, for many years, been urged to do, and answering as steadfast a

demand of Benj. F. Johnson's first and oldest friends, it has been decided that this further work of his be introduced to the reader of the volume as was the old man's first work to the reader of the newspaper of nearly ten years ago.

Directly, then, referring to the Indianapolis "Daily Journal,"—under whose management the writer had for some time been employed,—from issue of date June 17, 1882, under editorial caption of "A Boone County Pastoral," this article is herewith quoted:

Benj. F. Johnson, of Boone county, who considers the Journal a "very valubul" newspaper, writes to inclose us an original poem, desiring that we kindly accept it for publication, as "many neghbors and friends is astin' him to have the same struck off."

Mr. Johnson thoughtfully informs us that he is "no edjucated man," but that he has, "from childhood up tel old enugh to vote, allus wrote more er less poetry, as many of an albun in the neghborhood can testify." Again, he says that he writes "from the hart out"; and there is a touch of genuine pathos in the frank avowal, "Thare is times when I write the tears rolls down my cheeks."

In all sincerity, Mr. Johnson, we are glad to publish the poem you send, and just as you have written it. That is its greatest charm. Its very defects compose its excellence. You need no

better education than the one from which emanates "The Old Swimmin'-Hole." It is real poetry, and all the more tender and lovable for the unquestionable evidence it bears of having been written "from the hart out." The only thing we find to—but hold! Let us first lay the poem before the reader:

Here followed the poem, "The Old Swimmin'-Hole," entire—the editorial comment ending as follows:

The only thing now, Mr. Johnson—as we were about to observe—the only thing we find to criticise, at all relative to the poem, is your closing statement to the effect that "It was wrote to go to the tune of 'The Captin with his Whiskers!'" You should not have told us that, O Rare Ben. Johnson!

A week later, in the "Journal" of date June 24th, followed this additional mention of "Benj. F. Johnson, of Boone":

It is a pleasure for us to note that the publication of the poem of "The Old Swimmin'-Hole," to which the Journal, with just pride, referred last week, has proved almost as great a pleasure to its author as to the hosts of delighted readers who have written in its praise, or called to personally indorse our high opinion of its poetic value. We have just received a letter from Mr. Johnson, the author, inclosing us another lyrical performance, which in many features even surpasses the originality and spirit of the former effort. Certainly the least that can be said of it is that it stands a thorough proof of our first as-

sertion, that the author, though by no means a man of learning and profound literary attainments, is none the less a true poet and an artist. The letter, accompanying this later amaranth of blooming wildwood verse, we publish in its entirety, assured that Mr. Johnson's many admirers will be charmed, as we have been, at the delicious glimpse he gives us of his inspiration, modes of study, home-life, and surroundings.

"To the Editer of the Indanoplus Jurnal:

"Respected Sir—The paper is here, markin' the old swimmin'-hole, my poetry which you seem to like so well. I joy to see it in print, and I thank you, hart and voice, fer speakin' of its merrits in the way in which you do. I am glad you thought it was real poetry, as you said in your artikle. But I make bold to ast you what was your idy in sayin' I had ortent of told you it went to the tune I spoke of in my last. I felt highly flatered tel I got that fur. Was it because you don't know the tune refered to in the letter? Er wasent some words spelt right er not? Still ef you hadent of said somepin' aginst it Ide of thought you was makin' fun. As I said before I well know my own unedjucation, but I don't think that is any reason the feelin's of the soul is stunted in theyr growth however. 'Juge not less ye be juged,' says The Good Book, and so say I, ef I thought you was makin' fun of the lines that I wrote and which you done me the onner to have printed off in sich fine style that I have read it over and over again in the paper you sent, and I would like to have about three more ef you can spare the same

and state by mail what they will come at. All nature was in tune day before yisterday when your paper come to hand. It had ben a-raining hard fer some days, but that morning opened up as clear as a whissel. No clouds was in the sky, and the air was bammy with the warm sunshine and the wet smell of the earth and the locus blossoms and the flowrs and pennyroil and boneset. I got up, the first one about the place, and went forth to the plesant fields. I fed the stock with lavish hand and wortered them in merry glee, they was no bird in all the land no happier than me. I have jest wrote a verse of poetry in this letter; see ef you can find it. I also send you a whole poem which was wrote off the very day your paper come. I started it in the morning I have so feebly tride to pictur' to you and wound her up by suppertime, besides doin' a fare day's work around the place.

"Ef you print this one I think you will like it better than the other. This ain't a sad poem like the other was, but you will find it full of careful thought. I pride myself on that. I also send you 30 cents in stamps fer you to take your pay out of fer the other papers I said, and also fer three more with this in it ef you have it printed and oblige. Ef you don't print this poem, keep the stamps and send me three more papers with *the other one* in—makin' the sum totul of six (6) papers altogether in full. Ever your true friend,

BENJ. F. JOHNSON.

"N. B.—The tune of this one is 'The Bold Privateer.'"

Here followed the poem, "Thoughts Fer The Discuraged Farmer";—and here, too, fittingly ends any comment but that which would appear trivial and gratuitous.

Simply, in briefest conclusion, the hale, sound, artless, lovable character of Benj. F. Johnson remains, in the writer's mind, as from the first, far less a fiction than a living, breathing, vigorous reality.—So strong, indeed, has his personality been made manifest, that many times, in visionary argument with the sturdy old myth over certain changes from the original forms of his productions, he has so incontinently beaten down all suggestions as to a less incongruous association of thoughts and words, together with protests against his many violations of poetic method, harmony, and grace, that nothing was left the writer but to submit to what has always seemed —and in truth still seems—a superior wisdom of dictation.

J. W. R.

*Indianapolis, July*, 1891.

## SALUTATION

### TO BENJ. F. JOHNSON

*THE OLD MAN*

*Lo! steadfast and serene,*
*In patient pause between*
*The seen and the unseen,*
*What gentle zephyrs fan*
*Your silken silver hair,—*
*And what diviner air*
*Breathes round you like a prayer,*
*Old Man?*

*Can you, in nearer view*
*Of Glory, pierce the blue*
*Of happy Heaven through;*
*And, listening mutely, can*
*Your senses, dull to us,*
*Hear Angel-voices thus,*
*In chorus glorious—*
*Old Man?*

## SALUTATION

*In your reposeful gaze*
*The dusk of Autumn days*
*Is blent with April haze,*
*As when of old began*
*The bursting of the bud*
*Of rosy babyhood—*
*When all the world was good,*
*Old Man.*

*And yet I find a sly*
*Little twinkle in your eye;*
*And your whisperingly shy*
*Little laugh is simply an*
*Internal shout of glee*
*That betrays the fallacy*
*You'd perpetrate on me,*
*Old Man!*

*So just put up the frown*
*That your brows are pulling down!*
*Why, the fleetest boy in town,*
*As he bared his feet and ran,*
*Could read with half a glance—*
*And of keen rebuke, perchance—*
*Your secret countenance,*
*Old Man!*

*Now, honestly, confess:*
*Is an old man any less*
*Than the little child we bless*
*And caress when we can?*
*Isn't age but just a place*
*Where you mask the childish face*
*To preserve its inner grace,*
*Old Man?*

## SALUTATION

*Hasn't age a truant day,*
*Just as that you went astray*
*In the wayward, restless way,*
*When, brown with dust and tan,*
*Your roguish face essayed,*
*In solemn masquerade,*
*To hide the smile it made,*
*Old Man?*

*Now, fair, and square, and true,*
*Don't your old soul tremble through,*
*As in youth it used to do*
*When it brimmed and overran*
*With the strange, enchanted sights,*
*And the splendors and delights*
*Of the old "Arabian Nights,"*
*Old Man?*

*When, haply, you have fared*
*Where glad Aladdin shared*
*His lamp with you, and dared*
*The Afrite and his clan;*
*And, with him, clambered through*
*The trees where jewels grew—*
*And filled your pockets, too,*
*Old Man?*

*Or, with Sinbad, at sea—*
*And in veracity*
*Who has sinned as bad as he,*
*Or would, or will, or can?—*
*Have you listened to his lies,*
*With open mouth and eyes,*
*And learned his art likewise,*
*Old Man?*

*And you need not deny*
*That your eyes were wet as dry,*
*Reading novels on the sly!*
*And review them, if you can,*
*And the same warm tears will fall—*
*Only faster, that is all—*
*Over Little Nell and Paul,*
*Old Man!*

*O, you were a lucky lad—*
*Just as good as you were bad!*
*And the host of friends you had—*
*Charley, Tom, and Dick, and Dan;*
*And the old School-Teacher, too,*
*Though he often censured you;*
*And the girls in pink and blue,*
*Old Man.*

*And—as often you have leant,*
*In boyish sentiment,*
*To kiss the letter sent*
*By Nelly, Belle, or Nan—*
*Wherein the rose's hue*
*Was red, the violet blue—*
*And sugar sweet—and you,*
*Old Man,—*

*So, to-day, as lives the bloom,*
*And the sweetness, and perfume*
*Of the blossoms, I assume,*
*On the same mysterious plan*
*The Master's love assures,*
*That the self-same boy endures*
*In that hale old heart of yours,*
*Old Man.*

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# "THE OLD SWIMMIN'-HOLE"

AND

# 'LEVEN MORE POEMS

BY

BENJ. F. JOHNSON, OF BOONE

*The delights of our childhood is soon passed away,*
*And our gloryus youth it departs,—*
*And yit, dead and burried, they's blossoms of May*
*Ore theyr medderland graves in our harts.*
*So, friends of my bare-footed days on the farm,*
*Whether truant in city er not,*
*God prosper you same as He's prosperin' me,*
*Whilse your past haint despised er fergot.*

*Oh! they's nothin', at morn, that's as grand unto me*
*As the glorys of Natchur so fare,—*
*With the Spring in the breeze, and the bloom in the trees,*
*And the hum of the bees ev'rywhare!*
*The green in the woods, and the birds in the boughs,*
*And the dew spangled over the fields;*
*And the bah of the sheep and the bawl of the cows*
*And the call from the house to your meals!*

*Then ho! fer your brekfast! and ho! fer the toil*
*That waiteth alike man and beast!*
*Oh! its soon with my team I'll be turnin' up soil,*
*Whilse the sun shoulders up in the East*
*Ore the tops of the ellums and beeches and oaks,*
*To smile his godspeed on the plow,*
*And the furry and seed, and the Man in his need,*
*And the joy of the swet of his brow!*

## THE OLD SWIMMIN'-HOLE

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! whare the crick so still and deep
Looked like a baby-river that was laying half asleep,
And the gurgle of the worter round the drift jest below
Sounded like the laugh of something we onc't ust to know
Before we could remember anything but the eyes
Of the angels lookin' out as we left Paradise;
But the merry days of youth is beyond our controle,
And it's hard to part ferever with the old swimmin'-hole.

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! In the happy days of yore,
When I ust to lean above it on the old sickamore,
Oh! it showed me a face in its warm sunny tide
That gazed back at me so gay and glorified,
It made me love myself, as I leaped to caress
My shadder smilin' up at me with sich tenderness.
But them days is past and gone, and old Time's tuck his toll
From the old man come back to the old swimmin'-hole.

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! In the long, lazy days
When the hum-drum of school made so many run-a-ways,
How plesant was the jurney down the old dusty lane,
Whare the tracks of our bare feet was all printed so plane
You could tell by the dent of the heel and the sole
They was lots o' fun on hands at the old swimmin'-hole.
But the lost joys is past! Let your tears in sorrow roll
Like the rain that ust to dapple up the old swimmin'-hole.

Thare the bullrushes growed, and the cattails so tall,
And the sunshine and shadder fell over it all;
And it mottled the worter with amber and gold
Tel the glad lillies rocked in the ripples that rolled;
And the snake-feeder's four gauzy wings fluttered by
Like the ghost of a daisy dropped out of the sky,
Or a wownded apple-blossom in the breeze's controle
As it cut acrost some orchurd to'rds the old swimmin'-hole.

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! When I last saw the place,
The scenes was all changed, like the change in my face;
The bridge of the railroad now crosses the spot
Whare the old divin'-log lays sunk and fergot.
And I stray down the banks whare the trees ust to be—
But never again will theyr shade shelter me!
And I wish in my sorrow I could strip to the soul,
And dive off in my grave like the old swimmin'-hole.

## THOUGHTS FER THE DISCURAGED FARMER

THE summer winds is sniffin' round the bloomin' locus' trees;
And the clover in the pastur is a big day fer the bees,
And they been a-swiggin' honey, above board and on the sly,
Tel they stutter in theyr buzzin' and stagger as they fly.
The flicker on the fence-rail 'pears to jest spit on his wings
And roll up his feathers, by the sassy way he sings;
And the hoss-fly is a-whettin'-up his forelegs fer biz,
And the off-mare is a-switchin' all of her tale they is.

You can hear the blackbirds jawin' as they foller up the plow—
Oh, theyr bound to git theyr brekfast, and theyr not a-carin' how;
So they quarrel in the furries, and they quarrel on the wing—

But theyr peaceabler in pot-pies than any other thing:
And it's when I git my shotgun drawed up in stiddy rest,
She's as full of tribbelation as a yeller-jacket's nest;
And a few shots before dinner, when the sun's a-shinin'
right,
Seems to kindo'-sorto' sharpen up a feller's appetite!

They's been a heap o' rain, but the sun's out to-day,
And the clouds of the wet spell is all cleared away,
And the woods is all the greener, and the grass is greener
still;
It may rain again to-morry, but I don't think it will.
Some says the crops is ruined, and the corn's drownded
out,
And propha-sy the wheat will be a failure, without doubt;
But the kind Providence that has never failed us yet,
Will be on hands onc't more at the 'leventh hour, I bet!

Does the medder-lark complane, as he swims high and dry
Through the waves of the wind and the blue of the sky?
Does the quail set up and whissel in a disappinted way,
Er hang his head in silunce, and sorrow all the day?
Is the chipmuck's health a-failin'?—Does he walk, er does
he run?
Don't the buzzards ooze around up thare jest like they've
allus done?

Is they anything the matter with the rooster's lungs er
voice?
Ort a mortul be complanin' when dumb animals rejoice?

Then let us, one and all, be contentud with our lot;
The June is here this morning, and the sun is shining hot.
Oh! let us fill our harts up with the glory of the day,
And banish ev'ry doubt and care and sorrow fur away!
Whatever be our station, with Providence fer guide,
Sich fine circumstances ort to make us satisfied;
Fer the world is full of roses, and the roses full of dew,
And the dew is full of heavenly love that drips fer me
and you.

## A SUMMER'S DAY

THE Summer's put the idy in
My head that I'm a boy again;
  And all around's so bright and gay
  I want to put my team away,
  And jest git out whare I can lay
  And soak my hide full of the day!
But work is work, and must be done—
Yit, as I work, I have my fun,
Jest fancyin' these furries here
Is childhood's paths onc't more so dear:—
And so I walk through medder-lands,
  And country lanes, and swampy trails
Whare long bullrushes bresh my hands;
  And, tilted on the ridered rails
    Of deadnin' fences, "Old Bob White"
    Whissels his name in high delight,
And whirrs away. I wunder still,
Whichever way a boy's feet will—

Whare trees has fell, with tangled tops
  Whare dead leaves shakes, I stop fer breth,
Heerin' the acorn as it drops—
  H'istin' my chin up still as deth,
And watchin' clos't, with upturned eyes,
The tree whare Mr. Squirrel tries
To hide hisse'f above the limb,
But lets his own tale tell on him.
I wunder on in deeper glooms—
  Git hungry, hearin' female cries
From old farm-houses, whare perfumes
  Of harvest dinners seems to rise
And ta'nt a feller, hart and brane,
With memories he can't explane.

I wunder through the underbresh,
  Whare pig-tracks, pintin' to'rds the crick,
Is picked and printed in the fresh
  Black bottom-lands, like wimmern pick
Theyr pie-crusts with a fork, some way,
When bakin' fer camp-meetin' day.

I wunder on and on and on,
Tel my gray hair and beard is gone,
And ev'ry wrinkle on my brow
Is rubbed clean out and shaddered now

With curls as brown and fare and fine
As tenderls of the wild grape-vine
That ust to climb the highest tree
To keep the ripest ones fer me.
I wunder still, and here I am
Wadin' the ford below the dam—
The worter chucklin' round my knee
  At hornet-welt and bramble-scratch,
And me a-slippin' 'crost to see
  Ef Tyner's plums is ripe, and size
The old man's wortermelon-patch,
  With juicy mouth and drouthy eyes.
Then, after sich a day of mirth
And happiness as worlds is wurth—
  So tired that heaven seems nigh about,—
The sweetest tiredness on earth
  Is to git home and flatten out—
So tired you can't lay flat enugh,
And sorto' wish that you could spred
Out like molasses on the bed,
And jest drip off the aidges in
The dreams that never comes again.

## A HYMB OF FAITH

O, THOU that doth all things devise
And fashon fer the best,
He'p us who sees with mortul eyes
To overlook the rest.

They's times, of course, we grope in doubt,
And in afflictions sore;
So knock the louder, Lord, without,
And we'll unlock the door.

Make us to feel, when times looks bad
And tears in pitty melts,
Thou wast the only he'p we had
When they was nothin' else.

Death comes alike to ev'ry man
That ever was borned on earth;

Then let us do the best we can
To live fer all life's wurth.

Ef storms and tempusts dred to see
Makes black the heavens ore,
They done the same in Galilee
Two thousand years before.

But after all, the golden sun
Poured out its floods on them
That watched and waited fer the One
Then borned in Bethlyham.

Also, the star of holy writ
Made noonday of the night,
Whilse other stars that looked at it
Was envious with delight.

The sages then in wurship bowed,
From ev'ry clime so fare;
O, sinner, think of that glad crowd
That congergated thare!

They was content to fall in ranks
With One that knowed the way
From good old Jurden's stormy banks
Clean up to Jedgmunt Day.

No matter, then, how all is mixed
  In our near-sighted eyes,
All things is fer the best, and fixed
  Out straight in Paradise.

Then take things as God sends 'em here,
  And, ef we live er die,
Be more and more contenteder,
  Without a-astin' why.

O, Thou that doth all things devise
  And fashon fer the best,
He'p us who sees with mortul eyes
  To overlook the rest.

## WORTERMELON TIME

OLD wortermelon time is a-comin' round again,
And they ain't no man a-livin' any tickleder'n me,
Fer the way I hanker after wortermelons is a sin—
Which is the why and wharefore, as you can plainly see.

Oh! it's in the sandy soil wortermelons does the best,
And it's thare they'll lay and waller in the sunshine and the dew
Tel they wear all the green streaks clean off of theyr breast;
And you bet I ain't a-findin' any fault with them; air you?

They ain't no better thing in the vegetable line;
And they don't need much 'tendin', as ev'ry farmer knows;
And when theyr ripe and ready fer to pluck from the vine,
I want to say to you theyr the best fruit that grows.

It's some likes the yeller-core, and some likes the red,
And it's some says "The Little Californy" is the best;
But the sweetest slice of all I ever wedged in my head,
Is the old "Edingburg Mounting-sprout," of the west.

You don't want no punkins nigh your wortermelon vines—
'Cause, some-way-another, they'll spile your melons, shore;—
I've seed 'em taste like punkins, from the core to the rines,
Which may be a fact you have heerd of before.

But your melons that's raised right and 'tended to with care,
You can walk around amongst 'em with a parent's pride and joy,
And thump 'em on the heads with as fatherly a air
As ef each one of them was your little girl er boy.

I joy in my hart jest to hear that rippin' sound
When you split one down the back and jolt the halves in two,
And the friends you love the best is gethered all around—
And you says unto your sweethart, "Oh, here's the core fer you!"

And I like to slice 'em up in big pieces fer 'em all,
Espeshally the childern, and watch theyr high delight
As one by one the rines with theyr pink notches falls,
And they holler fer some more, with unquenched appetite.

Boys takes to it natchurl, and I like to see 'em eat—
A slice of wortermelon's like a frenchharp in theyr hands,
And when they "saw" it through theyr mouth sich music can't be beat—
'Cause it's music both the sperit and the stummick understands.

Oh, they's more in wortermelons than the purty-colored meat,
And the overflowin' sweetness of the worter squshed betwixt
The up'ard and the down'ard motions of a feller's teeth,
And it's the taste of ripe old age and juicy childhood mixed.

Fer I never taste a melon but my thoughts flies away
To the summertime of youth; and again I see the dawn,
And the fadin' afternoon of the long summer day,
And the dusk and dew a-fallin', and the night a-comin' on.

And thare's the corn around us, and the lispin' leaves and
trees,
And the stars a-peekin' down on us as still as silver
mice,
And us boys in the wortermelons on our hands and knees,
And the new-moon hangin' ore us like a yeller-cored
slice.

Oh! it's wortermelon time is a-comin' round again,
And they ain't no man a-livin' any tickleder'n me,
Fer the way I hanker after wortermelons is a sin—
Which is the why and wharefore, as you can plainly see.

## MY PHILOSOFY

I AIN'T, ner don't p'tend to be,
Much posted on philosofy;
But thare is times, when all alone,
I work out idees of my own.
And of these same thare is a few
I'd like to jest refer to you—
Pervidin' that you don't object
To listen clos't and rickollect.

I allus argy that a man
Who does about the best he can
Is plenty good enugh to suit
This lower mundane institute—
No matter ef his daily walk
Is subject fer his neghbor's talk,
And critic-minds of ev'ry whim
Jest all git up and go fer him!

I knowed a feller onc't that had
The yeller-janders mighty bad,—
And each and ev'ry friend he'd meet
Would stop and give him some receet
Fer cuorin' of 'em. But he'd say
He kindo' thought they'd go away
Without no medicin', and boast
That he'd git well without one doste.

He kep' a-yellerin' on—and they
Perdictin' that he'd die some day
Before he knowed it! Tuck his bed,
The feller did, and lost his head,
And wundered in his mind a spell—
Then rallied, and, at last, got well;
But ev'ry friend that said he'd die
Went back on him eternally!

Its natchurl enugh, I guess,
When some gits more and some gits less,
Fer them-uns on the slimmest side
To claim it ain't a fare divide;
And I've knowed some to lay and wait,
And git up soon, and set up late,
To ketch some feller they could hate
Fer goin' at a faster gait.

The signs is bad when folks commence
A-findin' fault with Providence,
And balkin' 'cause the earth don't shake
At ev'ry prancin' step they take.
No man is grate tel he can see
How less than little he would be
Ef stripped to self, and stark and bare
He hung his sign out anywhare.

My doctern is to lay aside
Contensions, and be satisfied:
Jest do your best, and praise er blame
That follers that, counts jest the same.
I've allus noticed grate success
Is mixed with troubles, more er less,
And it's the man who does the best
That gits more kicks than all the rest.

## WHEN THE FROST IS ON THE PUNKIN

WHEN the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the
shock,
And you hear the kyouck and gobble of the struttin'
turkey-cock,
And the clackin' of the guineys, and the cluckin' of the
hens,
And the rooster's hallylooyer as he tiptoes on the fence;
O, its then's the times a feller is a-feelin' at his best,
With the risin' sun to greet him from a night of peace-
ful rest,
As he leaves the house, bare-headed, and goes out to
feed the stock,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the
shock.

They's something kindo' harty-like about the atmusfere
When the heat of summer's over and the coolin' fall is
here—

Of course we miss the flowers, and the blossums on the
trees,
And the mumble of the hummin'-birds and buzzin' of the
bees;
But the air's so appetizin'; and the landscape through
the haze
Of a crisp and sunny morning of the airly autumn days
Is a pictur' that no painter has the colorin' to mock—
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the
shock.

The husky, rusty russel of the tossels of the corn,
And the raspin' of the tangled leaves, as golden as the
morn;
The stubble in the furries—kindo' lonesome-like, but still
A-preachin' sermuns to us of the barns they growed to
fill;
The strawstack in the medder, and the reaper in the shed;
The hosses in theyr stalls below—the clover overhead!—
O, it sets my hart a-clickin' like the tickin' of a clock,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the
shock!

Then your apples all is getherd, and the ones a feller
keeps
Is poured around the celler-floor in red and yeller heaps;

And your cider-makin' 's over, and your wimmern-folks is through
With their mince and apple-butter, and theyr souse and saussage, too! . . .
I don't know how to tell it—but ef sich a thing could be
As the Angels wantin' boardin', and they'd call around on *me*—
I'd want to'commodate 'em—all the whole-indurin' flock—
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock!

## ON THE DEATH OF LITTLE MAHALA ASHCRAFT

"LITTLE Haly! Little Haly!" cheeps the robin in the tree;
"Little Haly!" sighs the clover, "Little Haly!" moans
the bee;
"Little Haly! Little Haly!" calls the kill-deer at twilight;
And the katydids and crickets hollers "Haly!" all the
night.

The sunflowers and the hollyhawks droops over the
garden fence;
The old path down the gardenwalks still holds her foot-
prints' dents;
And the well-sweep's swingin' bucket seems to wait fer
her to come
And start it on its wortery errant down the old bee-gum.

The bee-hives all is quiet; and the little Jersey steer,
When any one comes nigh it, acts so lonesome-like and
queer;

And the little Banty chickens kindo' cutters faint and
low,
Like the hand that now was feedin' 'em was one they
didn't know.

They's sorrow in the wavin' leaves of all the apple-trees;
And sorrow in the harvest-sheaves, and sorrow in the
breeze;
And sorrow in the twitter of the swallers 'round the shed;
And all the song her red-bird sings is "Little Haly's
dead!"

The medder 'pears to miss her, and the pathway through
the grass,
Whare the dewdrops ust to kiss her little bare feet as she
passed;
And the old pin in the gate-post seems to kindo'-sorto'
doubt
That Haly's little sunburnt hands'll ever pull it out.

Did her father er her mother ever love her more'n me,
Er her sisters er her brother prize her love more tendurly?
I question—and what answer?—only tears, and tears
alone,
And ev'ry neghbor's eyes is full o' tear-drops as my own.

"Little Haly! Little Haly!" cheeps the robin in the tree;
"Little Haly!" sighs the clover, "Little Haly!" moans
the bee;
"Little Haly! Little Haly!" calls the kill-deer at twilight,
And the katydids and crickets hollers "Haly!" all the
night.

## THE MULBERRY TREE

O, ITS many's the scenes which is dear to my mind
As I think of my childhood so long left behind;
The home of my birth, with its old puncheon-floor,
And the bright morning-glorys that growed round the door;
The warped clab-board roof whare the rain it run off
Into streams of sweet dreams as I laid in the loft,
Countin' all of the joys that was dearest to me,
And a-thinkin' the most of the mulberry tree.

And to-day as I dream, with both eyes wide-awake,
I can see the old tree, and its limbs as they shake,
And the long purple berries that rained on the ground
Whare the pastur' was bald whare we trommpt it around.
And again, peekin' up through the thick leafy shade,
I can see the glad smiles of the friends when I strayed
With my little bare feet from my own mother's knee
To foller them off to the mulberry tree.

Leanin' up in the forks, I can see the old rail,
And the boy climbin' up it, claw, tooth, and toe-nail,
And in fancy can hear, as he spits on his hands,
The ring of his laugh and the rip of his pants.
But that rail led to glory, as certin and shore
As I'll never climb thare by that rout' any more—
What was all the green lauruls of Fame unto me,
With my brows in the boughs of the mulberry tree!

Then its who can fergit the old mulberry tree
That he knowed in the days when his thoughts was as free
As the flutterin' wings of the birds that flew out
Of the tall wavin' tops as the boys come about?
O, a crowd of my memories, laughin' and gay,
Is a-climbin' the fence of that pastur' to-day,
And a-pantin' with joy, as us boys ust to be,
They go racin' acrost fer the mulberry tree.

## TO MY OLD FRIEND, WILLIAM LEACHMAN

FER forty year and better you have been a friend to me,
Through days of sore afflictions and dire adversity,
You allus had a kind word of counsul to impart,
Which was like a healin' 'intment to the sorrow of my hart.

When I burried my first womern, William Leachman, it
was you
Had the only consolation that I could listen to—
Fer I knowed you had gone through it and had rallied
from the blow,
And when you said I'd do the same, I knowed you'd ort
to know.

But that time I'll long remember; how I wundered here
and thare—
Through the settin'-room and kitchen, and out in the
open air—

And the snowflakes whirlin', whirlin', and the fields a
frozen glare,
And the neghbors' sleds and wagons congergatin' ev'ry-
whare.

I turned my eyes to'rds heaven, but the sun was hid
away;
I turned my eyes to'rds earth again, but all was cold and
gray;
And the clock, like ice a-crackin', clickt the icy hours in
two—
And my eyes'd never thawed out ef it hadn't been fer
you!

We set thare by the smoke-house—me and you out thare
alone—
Me a-thinkin'—you a-talkin' in a soothin' undertone—
You a-talkin'—me a-thinkin' of the summers long ago,
And a-writin' "Marthy—Marthy" with my finger in the
snow!

William Leachman, I can see you jest as plane as I could
then;
And your hand is on my shoulder, and you rouse me up
again;

And I see the tears a-drippin' from your own eyes, as you say:
"Be rickonciled and bear it—we but linger fer a day!"

At the last Old Settlers' Meetin' we went j'intly, you and me—
Your hosses and my wagon, as you wanted it to be;
And sence I can remember, from the time we've neighbored here,
In all sich friendly actions you have double-done your sheer.

It was better than the meetin', too, that 9-mile talk we had
Of the times when we first settled here and travel was so bad;
When we had to go on hoss-back, and sometimes on "Shanks's mare,"
And "blaze" a road fer them behind that had to travel thare.

And now we was a-trottin' 'long a level gravel pike,
In a big two-hoss road-wagon, jest as easy as you like—
Two of us on the front seat, and our wimmern-folks behind,
A-settin' in theyr Winsor-cheers in perfect peace of mind!

And we pinted out old landmarks, nearly faded out of
sight:—
Thare they ust to rob the stage-coach; thare Gash Morgan
had the fight
With the old stag-deer that pronged him—how he
battled fer his life,
And lived to prove the story by the handle of his knife.

Thare the first griss-mill was put up in the Settlement,
and we
Had tuck our grindin' to it in the Fall of Forty-three—
When we tuck our rifles with us, techin' elbows all the
way,
And a-stickin' right together ev'ry minute, night and
day.

Thare ust to stand the tavern that they called the
"Travelers' Rest,"
And thare, beyent the covered bridge, "The Counter-
fitters' Nest"—
Whare they claimed the house was ha'nted—that a man
was murdered thare,
And burried underneath the floor, er 'round the place
somewhare.

And the old Plank-road they laid along in Fifty-one er two—
You know we talked about the times when the old road was new:
How "Uncle Sam" put down that road and never taxed the State
Was a problum, don't you rickollect, we couldn't *dim*onstrate?

Ways was devius, William Leachman, that me and you has past;
But as I found you true at first, I find you true at last;
And, now the time's a-comin' mighty nigh our jurney's end,
I want to throw wide open all my soul to you, my friend.

With the stren'th of all my bein', and the heat of hart and brane,
And ev'ry livin' drop of blood in artery and vane,
I love you and respect you, and I venerate your name,
Fer the name of William Leachman and True Manhood's jest the same!

## MY FIDDLE

My fiddle?—Well, I kindo' keep her handy, don't you know!
Though I ain't so much inclined to tromp the strings and switch the bow
As I was before the timber of my elbows got so dry,
And my fingers was more limber-like and caperish and spry;
Yit I can plonk and plunk and plink,
And tune her up and play,
And jest lean back and laugh and wink
At ev'ry rainy day!

My playin' 's only middlin'—tunes I picked up when a boy—
The kindo'-sorto' fiddlin' that the folks calls "cordaroy";
"The Old Fat Gal," and "Rye-straw," and "My Sailyor's on the Sea,"
Is the old cowtillions *I* "saw" when the ch'ice is left to me;

And so I plunk and plonk and plink,
And rosum-up my bow
And play the tunes that makes you think
The devil's in your toe!

I was allus a romancin', do-less boy, to tell the truth,
A-fiddlin' and a-dancin', and a-wastin' of my youth,
And a-actin' and a-cuttin'-up all sorts o' silly pranks
That wasn't worth a button of anybody's thanks!
But they tell me, when I ust to plink
And plonk and plunk and play,
My music seemed to have the kink
O' drivin' cares away!

That's how this here old fiddle's won my hart's indurin' love!
From the strings acrost her middle, to the schreechin' keys above—
From her "apern," over "bridge," and to the ribbon round her throat,
She's a wooin', cooin' pigeon, singin' "Love me" ev'ry note!
And so I pat her neck, and plink
Her strings with lovin' hands,—
And, list'nin' clos't, I sometimes think
She kindo' understands!

## THE CLOVER

SOME sings of the lilly, and daisy, and rose,
And the pansies and pinks that the Summertime throws
In the green grassy lap of the medder that lays
Blinkin' up at the skyes through the sunshiney days;
But what is the lilly and all of the rest
Of the flowers, to a man with a hart in his brest
That was dipped brimmin' full of the honey and dew
Of the sweet clover-blossoms his babyhood knew?

I never set eyes on a clover-field now,
Er fool round a stable, er climb in the mow,
But my childhood comes back jest as clear and as plane
As the smell of the clover I'm sniffin' again;
And I wunder away in a bare-footed dream,
Whare I tangle my toes in the blossoms that gleam
With the dew of the dawn of the morning of love
Ere it wept ore the graves that I'm weepin' above.

And so I love clover—it seems like a part
Of the sacerdest sorrows and joys of my hart;
And wharever it blossoms, oh, thare let me bow
And thank the good God as I'm thankin' Him now;
And I pray to Him still fer the stren'th when I die,
To go out in the clover and tell it good-bye,
And lovin'ly nestle my face in its bloom
While my soul slips away on a breth of purfume.

# NEGHBORLY POEMS

## ON FRIENDSHIP, GRIEF AND FARM-LIFE

BY

BENJ. F. JOHNSON, OF BOONE

*Us farmers in the country, as the seasons go and come,*
*Is purty much like other folks,—we're apt to grumble some!*
*The Spring's too back'ard fer us, er too for'ard—ary one—*
*We'll jaw about it anyhow, and have our way er none!*
*The thaw's set in too suddent; er the frost's stayed in the soil*
*Too long to give the wheat a chance, and crops is bound to spoil!*
*The weather's eether most too mild, er too outrageous rough,*
*And altogether too much rain, er not half rain enugh!*

*Now what I'd like and what you'd like is plane enugh to see:*
*It's jest to have old Providence drop round on you and me*
*And ast us what our views is first, regardin' shine er rain,*
*And post 'em when to shet her off, er let her on again!*
*And yit I'd ruther, after all—considern other chores*
*I' got on hands, a-tendin' both to my affares and yours—*
*I'd ruther miss the blame I'd git, a-rulin' things up thare,*
*And spend my extry time in praise and gratitude and prayer.*

## ERASMUS WILSON

'Ras Wilson, I respect you, 'cause
You're common, like you allus was
Afore you went to town and s'prised
The world by gittin' "reckonized,"
And yit perservin', as I say,
Your common hoss-sense ev'ryway!
And when that name o' yourn occurs
On hand-bills, er in newspapers,
Er letters writ by friends 'at ast
About you, same as in the past,
And neghbors and relations 'low
You're out o' the tall timber now,
And "gittin' thare" about as spry's
The next!—as *I say*, when my eyes,
Er ears, lights on your name, I mind
The first time 'at I come to find
You—and my Rickollection yells,
Jest jubilunt as old sleigh-bells—

"'Ras Wilson! Say! Hold up! and shake
A paw, fer old acquaintance sake!"

My *Rickollection*, more'n like,
Hain't overly too apt to strike
The what's-called "cultchurd public eye"
As wisdum of the deepest dye,—
And yit my *Rickollection* makes
So blame lots fewer bad mistakes,
Regardin' human-natchur' and
The fellers 'at I've shook theyr hand,
Than my *best jedgemunt's* done, the day
I've met 'em—'fore I got away,—
'At—Well, 'Ras Wilson, let me grip
*Your* hand in warmest pardnership!

Dad-burn ye!—Like to jest haul back
A' old flat-hander, jest che-whack!
And take you 'twixt the shoulders, say,
Sometime you're lookin' t'other way!—
Er, maybe whilse you're speakin' to
A whole blame Courthouse-full o' 'thu-
Syastic friends, I'd like to jest
Come in-like and break up the nest
Afore you hatched anuther cheer,
And say: "'Ras, *I* can't stand hitched here

All night—ner wouldn't ef I could!—
But Little Bethel Neghborhood,
You ust to live at, 's sent some word
Fer you, ef ary chance occurred
To git it to ye,—so ef you
*Kin* stop, I'm waitin' fer ye to!"

You're common, as I said afore—
You're common, yit oncommon *more*.—
You allus kindo' 'pear, to me,
What all mankind had ort to be—
Jest *natchurl*, and the more hurraws
You git, the less you know the cause—
Like as ef God Hisse'f stood by,
Where best on earth hain't half knee-high,
And *seein'* like, and knowin' *He*
'S the Only Grate Man really,
You're jest content to size your hight
With any feller-man's in sight.—
And even then they's scrubs, like me,
Feels stuck-up, in your company!

Like now:—I want to go with you
Plum out o' town a mile er two
Clean past the Fair-ground whare's some hint
O' pennyrile er peppermint,

And bottom-lands, and timber thick
Enugh to sorto' shade the crick!
I want to *see* you—want to set
Down somers, whare the grass hain't wet,
And kindo' *breathe* you, like puore air—
And taste o' your tobacker thare,
And talk and chaw! Talk o' the birds
We've knocked with cross-bows.—Afterwards
Drop, mayby, into some dispute
'Bout "pomgrannies," er cal'mus-root—
And how *they* growed, and *whare?*—on tree
Er vine?—Who's best boy-memory!—
And wasn't it *gingsang*, insted
O' cal'mus-root, growed like you said?—
Er how to tell a coon-track from
A mussrat's;—er how milksick come—
Er ef *cows* brung it?—Er why now
We never see no "muley"-cow—
Ner "frizzly"-chicken—ner no "clay-
Bank" mare—ner nothin' thataway!—
And what's come o' the *yeller*-core
Old wortermelons?—hain't no more.—
Tomattusus, the same—all *red*-
Uns nowadays—All past joys fled—

Each and all jest gone k-whizz!
Like our days o' childhood is!

Dag-gone it, 'Ras! they hain't no friend,
It 'pears-like, left to comperhend
Sich things as these but you, and see
How dratted sweet they air to me!
But you, 'at's loved 'em allus, and
Kin sort 'em out and understand
'Em, same as the fine books you've read,
And all fine thoughts you've writ, er said,
Er worked out, through long nights o' rain,
And doubts and fears, and hopes, again,
As bright as morning when she broke,—
You know a teardrop from a joke!
  And so, 'Ras Wilson, stop and shake
  A paw, fer old acquaintance sake!

## MY RUTHERS

[Writ durin' State Fair at Indanoplis, whilse visitin' a Soninlaw then residin' thare, who has sence got back to the country whare he says a man that's raised thare ort to a-stayed in the first place.]

I TELL you what I'd ruther do—
  Ef I only had my ruthers,—
I'd ruther work when I wanted to
  Than be bossed round by others;—
    I'd ruther kindo' git the swing
    O' what was *needed*, first, I jing!
    Afore I *swet* at anything!—
  Ef I only had my ruthers;—
In fact I'd aim to be the same
  With all men as my brothers;
And they'd all be the same with *me*—
  Ef I only had my ruthers.

I wouldn't likely know it all—
  Ef I only had my ruthers;—
I'd know *some* sense, and some base-ball—

Some *old* jokes, and—some others:
I'd know *some politics*, and 'low
Some tarif-speeches same as now,
Then go hear Nye on "Branes and How
To Detect Theyr Presence." *T'others*,
That stayed away, I'd *let* 'em stay—
All my dissentin' brothers
Could chuse as shore a kill er cuore,
Ef I only had my ruthers.

The pore 'ud git theyr dues *some*times—
Ef I only had my ruthers,—
And be paid *dollars* 'stid o' *dimes*,
Fer childern, wives and mothers:
Theyr boy that slaves; theyr girl that sews—
Fer *others*—not herself, God knows!—
The grave's *her* only change of clothes!
. . . Ef I only had my ruthers,
They'd all have "stuff" and time enugh
To answer one-another's
Appealin' prayer fer "lovin' care"—
Ef I only had my ruthers.

They'd be few folks 'ud ast fer trust,
Ef I only had my ruthers,

And blame few business-men to bu'st
  Theyrselves, er harts of others:
    Big Guns that come here durin' Fair-
    Week could put up jest anywhare,
    And find a full-and-plenty thare,
  Ef I only had my ruthers:
The rich and great 'ud 'sociate
  With all theyr lowly brothers,
Feelin' *we* done the honorun—
  Ef I only had my ruthers.

## ON A DEAD BABE

FLY away! thou heavenly one!—
I do hail thee on thy flight!
Sorrow? thou hath tasted none—
Perfect joy is yourn by right.
Fly away! and bear our love
To thy kith and kin above!

I can tetch thy finger-tips
Ca'mly, and bresh back the hair
From thy forr'ed with my lips,
And not leave a teardrop thare.—
Weep fer *Tomps and Ruth*—and *me*—
But I cannot weep fer *thee.*

## A OLD PLAYED-OUT SONG

It's the curiousest thing in creation,
Whenever I hear that old song
"Do They Miss Me at Home," I'm so bothered,
My life seems as short as it's long!—
Fer ev'rything 'pears like adzackly
It 'peared in the years past and gone,—
When I started out sparkin', at twenty,
And had my first neckercher on!

Though I'm wrinkelder, older and grayer
Right now than my parents was then,
You strike up that song "Do They Miss Me,"
And I'm jest a youngster again!—
I'm a-standin' back thare in the furries
A-wishin' fer evening to come,
And a-whisperin' over and over
Them words "Do They Miss Me at Home?"

You see, *Marthy Ellen she* sung it
The first time I heerd it; and so,
As she was my very first sweethart,
It reminds me of her, don't you know;—
How her face ust to look, in the twilight,
As I tuck her to Spellin'; and she
Kep' a-hummin' that song tel I ast her,
Pine-blank, ef she ever missed *me!*

I can shet my eyes now, as you sing it,
And hear her low answerin' words;
And then the glad chirp of the crickets,
As clear as the twitter of birds;
And the dust in the road is like velvet,
And the ragweed and fennel and grass
Is as sweet as the scent of the lillies
Of Eden of old, as we pass.

"*Do They Miss Me at Home?*" Sing it lower—
And softer—and sweet as the breeze
That powdered our path with the snowy
White bloom of the old locus'-trees!
Let the whipperwills he'p you to sing it,
And the echoes 'way over the hill,
Tel the moon boolges out, in a chorus
Of stars, and our voices is still.

But, oh! "They's a chord in the music
That's missed when *her* voice is away!"
Though I listen from midnight tel morning,
And dawn tel the dusk of the day!
And I grope through the dark, lookin' up'ards
And on through the heavenly dome,
With my longin' soul singin' and sobbin'
The words "Do They Miss Me at Home?"

## "COON-DOG WESS"

"Coon-dog Wess"—he allus went
'Mongst us here by that-air name.
Moved in this-here Settlement
From next county—he laid claim,—
Lived down in the bottoms—whare
*Ust* to be some coons in thare!—

In nigh Clayton's, next the crick,—
Mind old Billy ust to say
Coons in thare was jest that thick,
He'p him corn-plant any day!—
And, in rostneer-time, be then
Aggin' him to plant again!

Well,—In Spring o' '67,
This-here "Coon-dog Wess" he come—
Fetchin' 'long 'bout forty-'leven
Ornriest-lookin' hounds, I gum!

Ever mortul-man laid eyes
On sence dawn o' Christian skies!

Wife come traipsin' at the rag-
  Tag-and-bobtail of the crowd,
Dogs and childern, with a bag
  Corn-meal and some side-meat,—*Proud*
And as *independunt—My!*—
Yit a mild look in her eye.

Well—this "Coon-dog Wess" he jest
  Moved in that-air little pen
Of a pole-shed, aidgin' west
  On "The Slues o' Death," called then.—
Otter- and mink-hunters ust
To camp thare 'fore game vam-moosd.

Abul-bodied man,—and lots
  Call fer *choppers*—and fer hands
To git *cross-ties* out.—But what's
  *Work* to sich as understands
Ways appinted and is hence
Under special providence?—

"Coon-dog Wess's" holts was *hounds*
  And *coon-huntin'*; and he knowed

*His* own range, and stayed in bounds
And left work fer them 'at showed
*Talents* fer it—same as his
Gifts regardin' coon-dogs is.

Hounds of ev'ry mungerl breed
Ever whelped on earth!—Had these
*Yeller* kind, with punkin-seed
Marks above theyr eyes—and fleas
Both to sell and keep!—Also
These-here *lop-yeerd* hounds, you know.—

Yes-and *brindle* hounds—and long,
Ga'nt hounds, with them eyes they' got
So blame *sorry*, it seems wrong,
'Most, to kick 'em as to not!
Man, though, wouldn't dast, I guess,
Kick a hound fer "Coon-dog Wess"!

'Tended to his own affairs
Stric'ly;—made no brags,—and yit
You could see 'at them hounds' cares
'Peared like *his*,—and he'd a-fit
Fer 'em, same as wife er child!—
Them facts made folks rickonciled,

Sorto', fer to let him be
And not pester him. And then
Word begin to spread 'at he
Had brung in as high as ten
Coon-pelts in one night—and yit
Didn't 'pear to boast of it!

Neghborhood made some complaints
'Bout them plague-gone hounds at night
Howlin' fit to wake the saints,
Clean from dusk tel plum day-light!
But to "Coon-dog Wess" them-thare
Howls was "music in the air"!

Fetched his pelts to Gilson's Store—
Newt he shipped fer him, and said,
Sence *he'd* cooned thare, he'd shipped more
Than three hunderd pelts!—"By Ned!
Git shet of my *store*," Newt says,
"I'd go in with 'Coon-dog Wess'!"

And the feller 'peared to be
Makin' best and most he could
Of his rale prospairity:—
Bought some household things—and *good*,—

Likewise, wagon-load onc't come
From wharever he'd moved from.

But pore feller's huntin'-days,
'Bout them times, was glidin' past!—
Goes out onc't one night and *stays!*
. . . Neghbors they turned out, at last,
Headed by his wife and one
Half-starved hound—and search begun.

Boys said, that blame hound, he led
Searchin' party, 'bout a half
Mile ahead, and bellerin', said,
Worse'n ary yearlin' calf!—
Tel, at last, come fur-off sounds
Like the howl of other hounds.

And-sir, shore enugh, them signs
Fetched 'em—in a' hour er two—
Whare the *pack* was;—and they finds
"Coon-dog Wess" *right thare;*—And you
Would admitted he was right
*Stayin'*, as he had, *all night!*

Facts is, cuttin' down a tree,
The blame thing had sorto' fell

In a twist-like—*mercy me!*
And had ketched him.—Couldn't tell,
Wess said, *how* he'd managed—yit
He'd got both legs under it!

Fainted and come to, I s'pose,
'Bout a dozen times whilse they
Chopped him out!—And wife she froze
To him!—bresh his hair away
And smile cheerful'—only when
He'd faint.—Cry and kiss him *then.*

Had *his* nerve!—And nussed him through,—
Neghbors he'pped her—all she'd stand.—
Had a loom, and she could do
Carpet-weavin' railly grand!—
"'Sides," she ust to laugh and say,
"She'd have Wess, now, *night* and day!"

As fer *him*, he'd say, says-ee,
"I'm resigned to bein' lame:—
They was four coons up that tree,
And hounds got 'em, jest the same!"
'Peared like, one er two legs less
Never worried "Coon-dog Wess"!

## LINES TO
## PERFESSER JOHN CLARK RIDPATH
### A.M., LL. D. T-Y-TY!

[Cumposed by A Old Friend of the Fambily sence 'way back in the Forties, when they Settled nigh Fillmore, Putnum County, this State, whare John was borned and growed up, you might say, like the way-side flower.]

YOUR neghbors in the country, whare you come from,
hain't fergot!—
We knowed you even better than your own-self, like as
not.
We profissied your runnin'-geers 'ud stand a soggy load
And pull her, purty stiddy, up a mighty rocky road:
We been a-watchin' your career sence you could write
your name—
But way you writ it *first*, I'll say, was jest a burnin'
shame!—
Your "J. C." in the copybook, and "Ridpath"—mercy-
sakes!—
Quiled up and tide in dubble bows, lookt like a nest o'
snakes!—

But *you* could read it, I *suppose*, and kindo' gloted on
A-bein' "*J. C. Ridpath*" when *we* only called you
"*John.*"

But you'd work 's well as fool, and what you had to do
was *done:*
We've watched you at the woodpile—not the *woodshed*—
wasent none,—
And snow and sleet, and haulin', too, and lookin' after
stock,
And milkin', nights, and feedin' pigs,—then turnin' back
the clock,
So's you could set up studyin' your 'Rethmatic, and fool
Your Parents, whilse a-piratin' your way through winter
school!
And I've heerd tell—from your own folks—you've set
and baked your face
A-readin' Plutark Slives all night by that old fi-er-place.—
Yit, 'bout them times, the blackboard, onc't, had on
it, I *de*-clare,
"Yours truly, *J. Clark* Ridpath."—And the teacher—
left it thare!

And they was other symptums, too, that pinted, plane
as day,

To nothin' short of *College!*—and *one* was the lovin' way
Your mother had of cheerin' you to efforts brave and strong,
And puttin' more faith in you, as you needed it along:
She'd pat you on the shoulder, er she'd grab you by the hands,
And *laugh* sometimes, er *cry* sometimes.—They's few that understands
Jest *what* theyr mother's drivin' at when they act thataway;—
But I'll say this fer *you*, John-Clark,—you answered, night and day,
To ev'ry trust and hope of hers—and half your College fame
Was battled fer and won fer her and glory of her name.

The likes of *you* at *College!* But you went thare. How you paid
Your way nobody's astin'—but you *worked*,—you hain't afraid,—
Your *clothes* was, more'n likely, kindo' out o' style, perhaps,
And not as snug and warm as some 'at hid the other chaps;—

But when it come to *Intullect*—they tell me yourn was
dressed
A *leetle* mite *superber*-like than any of the rest!
And thare you *stayed*—and thare you've made your
rickord, fare and square—
Tel *now* its *Fame* 'at writes your name, approvin', *ev'ry-*
*whare*—
Not *jibblets* of it, nuther,—but all John Clark Ridpath,
set
Plum at the dashboard of the whole-endurin' Alfabet!

## A TALE OF THE AIRLY DAYS

Oh! tell me a tale of the airly days—
Of the times as they ust to be;
"Piller of Fi-er" and "Shakspeare's Plays"
Is a' most too deep fer me!
I want plane facts, and I want plane words,
Of the good old-fashiond ways,
When speech run free as the songs of birds
'Way back in the airly days.

Tell me a tale of the timber-lands—
Of the old-time pioneers;
Somepin' a pore man understands
With his feelins's well as ears.
Tell of the old log house,—about
The loft, and the puncheon flore—
The old fi-er-place, with the crane swung out,
And the latch-string thrugh the door.

Tell of the things jest as they was—
They don't need no excuse!—
Don't tetch 'em up like the poets does,
Tel theyr all too fine fer use!—
Say they was 'leven in the fambily—
Two beds, and the chist, below,
And the trundle-beds that each helt three,
And the clock and the old bureau.

Then blow the horn at the old back-door
Tel the echoes all halloo,
And the childern gethers home onc't more,
Jest as they ust to do:
Blow fer Pap tel he hears and comes,
With Tomps and Elias, too,
A-marchin' home, with the fife and drums
And the old Red White and Blue!

Blow and blow tel the sound draps low
As the moan of the whipperwill,
And wake up Mother, and Ruth and Jo,
All sleepin' at Bethel Hill:
Blow and call tel the faces all
Shine out in the back-log's blaze,
And the shadders dance on the old hewed wall
As they did in the airly days.

## "MYLO JONES'S WIFE"

"MYLO JONES'S wife" was all
I heerd, mighty near, last Fall—
Visitun relations down
T'other side of Morgantown!
Mylo Jones's wife she does
This and that, and "those" and "thus"!—
Can't 'bide babies in her sight—
Ner no childern, day and night,
Whoopin' round the premises—
*Ner no nothin' else*, I guess!

Mylo Jones's wife she 'lows
She's the boss of her own house!—
Mylo—consequences is—
Stays whare things seem *some* like *his*,—
Uses, mostly, with the stock—
Coaxin' "Old Kate" not to balk,

Ner kick hoss-flies' branes out, ner
Act, I s'pose, so much like *her!*
Yit the wimmern-folks tells you
She's *perfection.*—Yes they do!

Mylo's wife she says she's found
Home hain't home with *men-folks* round
When they's work like *hern* to do—
Picklin' pears and *butchern,* too,
And a-rendern lard, and then
Cookin' fer a pack of men
To come trackin' up the flore
*She's* scrubbed *tel* she'll scrub no *more!*—
Yit she'd keep things clean ef they
Made her scrub tel Jedgmunt Day!

Mylo Jones's wife she sews
Carpet-rags and patches clothes
Jest year *in* and *out!*—and yit
Whare's the livin' use of it?
She asts Mylo that.—And he
Gits back whare he'd ruther be,
With his team;—jest *plows*—and don't
Never sware—like some folks won't!
Think ef *he'd cut loose,* I gum!
'D he'p his heavenly chances some!

Mylo's wife don't see no use,
Ner no reason ner excuse
Fer his pore relations to
Hang round like they allus do!
Thare 'bout onc't a year—and *she*—
She jest *ga'nts* 'em, folks tells me,
On spiced pears!—Pass Mylo one,
He says "No, he don't chuse none!"
Workin' men like Mylo they
'D ort to have *meat* ev'ry day!

Dad-burn Mylo Jones's wife!
Ruther rake a blame caseknife
'Crost my wizzen than to see
Sich a womern rulin' *me!*—
Ruther take and turn in and
Raise a fool mule-colt by hand!
*Mylo,* though—od-rot the man!—
Jest keeps ca'm—like some folks *can*—
And 'lows sich as her, I s'pose,
Is *Man's he'pmeet!*—Mercy knows!

## ON A SPLENDUD MATCH

[On the night of the marraige of the foregoin' couple, which shall be nameless here, these lines was ca'mly dashed off in the albun of the happy bride whilse the shivver-ree was goin' on outside the residence.]

HE was warned aginst the *womern*—
  She was warned aginst the *man.*—
And ef *that* won't make a weddin',
  W'y, they's nothin' else that can!

## OLD JOHN CLEVENGER ON BUCKEYES

Old John Clevenger lets on,
  Allus, like he's purty rough
Timber.—He's a grate old John!—
  "Rough?"—don't swaller no sich stuff!
Moved here, sence the war was through,
  From Ohio—somers near
Old Bucyrus,—loyal, too,
  As us "Hoosiers" is to *here!*
Git old John stirred up a bit
  On his old home stompin'-ground—
Talks same as he lived thare yit,
  When some subject brings it round—
Like, fer instunce, Sund'y last,
  Fetched his wife, and et and stayed
All night with us.—Set and gassed
  Tel plum midnight—'cause I made
Some remark 'bout "buckeyes" and
  "What was buckeyes good fer?"—So,
Like I 'lowed, he waved his hand
  And lit in and let me know:—

"'What is Buckeyes good fer?'—What's
*Pineys* and *fergitmenots?*—
Honeysuckles, and sweet-peas,
And sweet-williamsuz, and these
Johnny-jump-ups ev'rywhare,
Growin' round the roots o' trees
In Spring-weather?—what air *they*
Good fer?—kin you tell me—*Hey?*
'Good to look at?' Well they air!
'Specially when *Winter's* gone,
Clean *dead-certin!* and the wood's
Green again, and sun feels good's
June!—and shed your blame boots on
The back porch, and lit out to
Roam round like you ust to do,
Bare-foot, up and down the crick,
Whare the buckeyes growed so thick,
And witch-hazel and pop-paws,
And hackberries and black-haws—
With wild pizen-vines jis knit
*Over* and *en-nunder* it,
And wove round it all, I jing!
Tel you couldn't hardly stick
A durn *caseknife* through the thing!

Wriggle round through *that;* and then—
All het-up, and scratched and tanned,
And muskeeter-bit and mean-
Feelin'—all at onc't again,
Come out suddent on a clean
Slopin' little hump o' green
Dry soft grass, as fine and grand
As a pollor-sofy!—And
Jis pile down thare!—and tell *me*
*Anywhares* you'd ruther be—
'Ceptin' *right thare,* with the wild-
Flowrs all round ye, and your eyes
Smilin' with 'em at the skies,
Happy as a little child!
Well!—right here, *I* want to say,
Poets kin talk all they please
'Bout 'wild-flowrs, in colors gay,'
And 'sweet blossoms flauntin' theyr
Beauteous fragrunce on the breeze'—
But the sight o' *buckeyes* jis
Sweet to me as *blossoms* is!

"I'm *Ohio-born*—right whare
People's *all* called 'Buckeyes' *thare*—

'Cause, I s'pose, our buckeye crap's
Biggest in the world, perhaps!—
Ner my head don't stretch my hat
Too much on account o' *that!*—
'Cause it's Natchur's ginerus hand
Sows 'em broadcast ore the land,
With eye-single fer man's good
And the gineral neghborhood!
So *buckeyes* jis natchurly
'Pears like *kith-and-kin* to *me!*
'Slike the good old sayin' wuz,
'Purty *is* as purty *does!*'—
We can't *eat* 'em, cookd er raw—
Yit, I mind, *tomattusuz*
Wuz considerd pizenus
*Onc't*—and dasent eat 'em!—*Pshaw*—
'Twouldn't take *me* by supprise,
Someday, ef we et *buckeyes!*
That, though, 's nuther here ner thare!—
*Jis the Buckeye*, whare we air,
In the present times, is what
Ockuppies my lovin' care
And my most perfoundest thought!
. . . Guess, this minute, what I got
In my pocket, 'at I've packed

Purt'-nigh forty year.—A dry,
Slick and shiny, warped and cracked,
Wilted, weazened old *buckeye!*
What's it *thare* fer? What's my hart
In my *brest* fer?—'Cause it's part
Of my *life*—and 'tends to biz—
Like this *buckeye's* bound to act—
'Cause *it* 'tends to *Rhumatiz!*

". . . Ketched more *rhumatiz* than *fish,*
Seinen', onc't—and pants froze on
My blame legs!—And ust to wish
I wuz well er *dead and gone!*
Doc give up the case, and shod
His old hoss again and stayed
On good roads!—*And thare I laid!*
Pap he tuck some bluegrass sod
Steeped in whisky, bilin'-hot,
And socked *that* on! Then I got
Sorto' holt o' him, *somehow*—
Kindo' crazy-like, they say—
And I'd *killed* him, like as not,
Ef I hadn't swooned away!
*Smell my scortcht pelt purt' nigh now!*
Well—to make a long tale short—

I hung on the blame disease
Like a shavin'-hoss! and sort
O' wore it out by slow degrees—
Tel my legs wuz straight enugh
To poke through my pants again
And kick all the doctor-stuff
In the fi-er-place! Then turned in
And tuck Daddy Craig's old cuore—
*Jis a buckeye*—and that's *shore.*—
Hain't no case o' rhumatiz
Kin subsist whare buckeyes is!"

## THE HOSS

THE hoss he is a splendud beast;
He is man's friend, as heaven desined,
And, search the world from west to east,
No honester you'll ever find!

Some calls the hoss "a pore dumb brute,"
And yit, like Him who died fer you,
I say, as I theyr charge refute,
"'Fergive; they know not what they do!'"

No wiser animal makes tracks
Upon these earthly shores, and hence
Arose the axium, true as facts,
Extoled by all, as "Good hoss-sense!"

The hoss is strong, and knows his stren'th,—
You hitch him up a time er two

And lash him, and he'll go his len'th
  And kick the dashboard out fer you!

But, treat him allus good and kind,
  And never strike him with a stick,
Ner aggervate him, and you'll find
  He'll never do a hostile trick.

A hoss whose master tends him right
  And worters him with daily care,
Will do your biddin' with delight,
  And act as docile as *you* air.

He'll paw and prance to hear your praise,
  Because he's learnt to love you well;
And, though you can't tell what he says,
  He'll nicker all he wants to tell.

He knows you when you slam the gate
  At early dawn, upon your way
Unto the barn, and snorts elate,
  To git his corn, er oats, er hay.

He knows you, as the orphant knows
  The folks that loves her like theyr own,

And raises her and "finds" her clothes,
  And "schools" her tel a womern-grown!

I claim no hoss will harm a man,
  Ner kick, ner run away, cavort,
Stump-suck, er balk, er "catamaran,"
  Ef you'll jest treat him as you ort.

But when I see the beast abused,
  And clubbed around as I've saw some,
I want to see his owner noosed,
  And jest yanked up like Absolum!

Of course they's differunce in stock,—
  A hoss that has a little yeer,
And slender build, and shaller hock,
  Can beat his shadder, mighty near!

Whilse one that's thick in neck and chist
  And big in leg and full in flank,
That tries to race, I still insist
  He'll have to take the second rank.

And I have jest laid back and laughed,
  And rolled and wallered in the grass

At fairs, to see some heavy-draft
  Lead out at *first*, yit come in *last!*

Each hoss has his appinted place,—
  The heavy hoss should plow the soil;—
The blooded racer, he must race,
  And win big wages fer his toil.

I never bet—ner never wrought
  Upon my feller-man to bet—
And yit, at times, I've often thought
  Of my convictions with regret.

I bless the hoss from hoof to head—
  From head to hoof, and tale to mane!—
I bless the hoss, as I have said,
  From head to hoof, and back again!

I love my God the first of all,
  Then Him that perished on the cross,
And next, my wife,—and then I fall
  Down on my knees and love the hoss.

## EZRA HOUSE

[These lines was writ, in ruther high sperits, jest at the close of what's called the Anti Bellum Days, and more to be a-foolin' than anything else,—though they is more er less facts in it. But some of the boys, at the time we was all a-singin' it, fer Ezry's benefit, to the old tune of "The Oak and the Ash and the Bonny Willer Tree," got it struck off in the weekly, without leave er lisence of mine; and so sence they's allus some of 'em left to rigg me about it yit, I might as well claim the thing right here and now, so here goes. I give it jest as it appeard, fixed up and grammatisized consider'ble, as the editer told me he took the liburty of doin', in that sturling old home paper THE ADVANCE—as sound a paper yit to-day and as stanch and abul as you'll find in a hunderd.]

COME listen, good people, while a story I do tell,
Of the sad fate of one which I knew so passing well;
He enlisted at McCordsville, to battle in the South,
And protect his country's union; his name was Ezra House.

He was a young school-teacher, and educated high
In regards to Ray's arithmetic, and also Algebra:
He give good satisfaction, but at his country's call
He dropped his position, his Algebra and all.

"It's oh, I'm going to leave you, kind scholars," he said—
For he wrote a composition the last day and read;
And it brought many tears in the eyes of the school,
To say nothing of his sweetheart he was going to leave
so soon.

"I have many recollections to take with me away,
Of the merry transpirations in the school-room so gay;
And of all that's past and gone I will never regret
I went to serve my country at the first of the outset!"

He was a good penman, and the lines that he wrote
On that sad occasion was too fine for me to quote,—
For I was there and heard it, and I ever will recall
It brought the happy tears to the eyes of us all.

And when he left, his sweetheart she fainted away,
And said she could never forget the sad day
When her lover so noble, and galliant and gay,
Said "Fare you well, my true love!" and went marching
away.

But he hadn't been gone for more than two months,
When the sad news come—"he was in a skirmish once,
And a cruel Rebel ball had wounded him full sore
In the region of the chin, through the canteen he wore."

But his health recruited up, and his wounds they got well,
But whilst he was in battle at Bull Run or Malvern Hill,
The news come again, so sorrowful to hear—
"A sliver from a bombshell cut off his right ear."

But he stuck to the boys, and it's often he would write,
That "he wasn't afraid for his country to fight."
But oh, had he returned on a furlough, I believe
He would not, to-day, have such cause to grieve.

For in another battle—the name I never heard—
He was guarding the wagons when an accident occurred,—
A comrade who was under the influence of drink,
Shot him with a musket through the right cheek, I think.

But his dear life was spared; but it hadn't been for long,
Till a cruel Rebel colonel come riding along,
And struck him with his sword, as many do suppose,
For his cap-rim was cut off, and also his nose.

But Providence, who watches o'er the noble and the
brave,
Snatched him once more from the jaws of the grave;
And just a little while before the close of the war,
He sent his picture home to his girl away so far.

And she fell into decline, and she wrote in reply,
"She had seen his face again and was ready to die";
And she wanted him to promise, when she was in her
tomb,
He would only visit that by the light of the moon.

But he never returned at the close of the war,
And the boys that got back said he hadn't the heart;
But he got a position in a powder-mill, and said
He hoped to meet the doom that his country denied.

## A PEN-PICTUR'
## OF A CERTIN FRIVVOLUS OLD MAN

MOST ontimely old man yit!
'Pear-like sometimes he jest *tries*
His fool-self, and takes the bitt
In his teeth and jest de-fies
All perpryties!—Lay and swet
Doin' *nothin'*—only jest
Sorto' speckillatun on
Whare old summertimes is gone,
And 'bout things that he loved best
When a youngster! Heerd him say
*Springtimes* made him thataway—
Speshully on *Sund'ys*—when
Sun shines out and in again,
And the lonesome old hens they
Git off under the old kern-
Bushes, and in deep concern

*Talk-like to theyrselvs*, and scratch
Kindo' absunt-minded, jest
Like theyr thoughts was fur away
In some neghbor's gyarden-patch
Folks has tended keerfullest!
Heerd the old man dwell on these
Idys time and time again!—
Heerd him claim that orchurd-trees
Bloomin', put the mischief in
His old hart sometimes that bad
And owdacious that he "*had*
To break loose *some*way," says he,
"Ornry as I ust to be!"

Heerd him say one time—when I
Was a sorto' standin' by,
And the air so still and clear,
Heerd the bell fer church clean here!—
Said: "Ef I could climb and set
On the old three-cornerd rail
Old home-place, nigh Maryette',
Swop my soul off, hide and tale!"
And-sir! blame ef tear and laugh
Didn't ketch him half and half!
"Oh!" he says, "to wake and be

Bare-foot, in the airly dawn
In the pastur'!—thare," says he,
"Standin' whare the cow's slep' on
The cold, dewy grass that's got
*Print* of her jest steamy hot
Fer to warm a feller's heels
In a while!—How good it feels!
Sund'y!—Country!—Morning!—Hear
Nothin' but the *silunce*—see
Nothin' but green woods and clear
Skies and unwrit poetry
By the acre! . . . Oh!" says he,
"What's this voice of mine?—to seek
To speak out, and yit *can't* speak!

"*Think!*—the lazyest of days"—
Takin' his contrairyest leap,
He went on,—"git up, er sleep—
Er whilse feedin', watch the haze
Dancin' 'crost the wheat,—and keep
My pipe goin' laisurely—
Puff and whiff as pleases me,—
Er I'll leave a trail of smoke
Through *the house!*—no one'll say
'*Throw that nasty thing away!*'

'Pear-like nothin' sacerd's broke,
Goin' bare-foot ef I chuse!—
I *have fiddled;*—and dug bait
And *went fishin';*—pitched hoss-shoes—
Whare they couldn't see us from
The main road.—And I've *beat* some.
I've set round and had my joke
With the thrashers at the barn—
And I've swopped 'em yarn fer yarn!—
Er I've he'pped the childern poke
Fer hens'-nests—agged on a match
'Twixt the boys, to watch 'em scratch
And paw round and rip and tare,
And bust buttons and pull hair
To theyr rompin' harts' content—
And me jest a-settin' thare
Hatchin' out more devilment!

"What you s'pose now ort to be
Done with sich a man?" says he—
"Sich a fool-old-man as me!"

## WET-WEATHER TALK

It hain't no use to grumble and complane;
It's jest as cheap and easy to rejoice.—
When God sorts out the weather and sends rain,
W'y, rain's my choice.

Men ginerly, to all intents—
Although they're apt to grumble some—
Puts most theyr trust in Providence,
And takes things as they come—
That is, the commonality
Of men that's lived as long as me
Has watched the world enugh to learn
They're not the boss of this concern.

With *some*, of course, it's different—
I've saw *young* men that knowed it all,
And didn't like the way things went
On this terrestchul ball;—

But all the same, the rain, some way,
Rained jest as hard on picnic day;
Er, when they railly *wanted* it,
It mayby wouldn't rain a bit!

In this existunce, dry and wet
Will overtake the best of men—
Some little skift o' clouds'll shet
The sun off now and then.—
And mayby, whilse you're wundern who
You've fool-like lent your umbrell' to,
And *want* it—out'll pop the sun,
And you'll be glad you hain't got none!

It aggervates the farmers, too—
They's too much wet, er too much sun,
Er work, er waitin' round to do
Before the plowin' 's done:
And mayby, like as not, the wheat,
Jest as it's lookin' hard to beat,
Will ketch the storm—and jest about
The time the corn's a-jintin' out.

These-here *cy-clones* a-foolin' round—
And back'ard crops!—and wind and rain!—

And yit the corn that's wallerd down
May elbow up again!—
They hain't no sense, as I can see,
Fer mortuls, sich as us, to be
A-faultin' Natchur's wise intents,
And lockin' horns with Providence!

It hain't no use to grumble and complane;
It's jest as cheap and easy to rejoice.—
When God sorts out the weather and sends rain,
W'y, rain's my choice.

## THOUGHTS ON A PORE JOKE

I LIKE fun—and I like jokes
'Bout as well as most o' folks!—
  Like my joke, and like my fun;—
But a joke, I'll state right here,
'S got some p'int—er I don't keer
  Fer no joke that hain't got none.—
I hain't got no use, I'll say,
Fer a *pore* joke, anyway!

F'rinstunce, now, when *some* folks gits
To relyin' on theyr wits,
Ten to one they git too smart
And *spile* it all, right at the start!
  Feller wants to jest go slow
  And do his *thinkin'* first, you know.
'F I can't think up somepin' good,
I set still and chaw my cood!
  'F you *think* nothin'—jest keep on,
  But don't *say* it—er you're gone!

## A MORTUL PRAYER

Oh! Thou that vaileth from all eyes
The glory of Thy face,
And setteth throned behind the skies
In Thy abiding-place:
Though I but dimly recko'nize
Thy purposes of grace;
And though with weak and wavering
Deserts, and vexd with fears,
I lift the hands I cannot wring
All dry of sorrow's tears,
Make puore my prayers that daily wing
Theyr way unto Thy ears!

Oh! with the hand that tames the flood
And smooths the storm to rest,
Make ba'mmy dews of all the blood
That stormeth in my brest,

And so refresh my hart to bud
And bloom the loveliest.
Lull all the clammer of my soul
To silunce; bring release
Unto the brane still in controle
Of doubts; bid sin to cease,
And let the waves of pashun roll
And kiss the shores of peace.

Make me to love my feller-man—
Yea, though his bitterness
Doth bite as only adders can—
Let *me* the fault confess,
And go to him and clasp his hand
And love him none the less.
So keep me, Lord, ferever free
From vane concete er whim;
And he whose pius eyes can see
My faults, however dim,—
Oh! let him pray the least fer me,
And me the most fer him.

## THE FIRST BLUEBIRD

JEST rain and snow! and rain again!
And dribble! drip! and blow!
Then snow! and thaw! and slush! and then—
Some more rain and snow!

This morning I was 'most afeard
To *wake* up—when, I jing!
I seen the sun shine out and heerd
The first bluebird of Spring!—
Mother she'd raised the winder some;—
And in acrost the orchurd come,
Soft as a angel's wing,
A breezy, treesy, beesy hum,
Too sweet fer anything!

The winter's shroud was rent a-part—
The sun bust forth in glee,—
And when *that bluebird* sung, my hart
Hopped out o' bed with me!

## EVAGENE BAKER—WHO WAS DYIN' OF DRED CONSUMTION AS THESE LINES WAS PENNED BY A TRUE FRIEND

Pore afflicted Evagene!
Whilse the woods is fresh and green,
And the birds on ev'ry hand
Sings in rapture sweet and grand,—
Thou, of all the joyus train,
Art bedridden, and in pain
  Sich as only them can cherish
  Who, like flowrs, is first to perish!

When the neghbors brought the word
She was down, the folks inferred
It was jest a cold she'd caught,
Dressin' thinner than she'd ort
Fer the frolicks and the fun
Of the dancin' that she'd done

'Fore the Spring was flush er ary
Blossom on the peach er cherry.

But, last Sund'y, her request
Fer the Church's prayers was jest
Rail hart-renderin' to hear!—
Many was the silunt tear
And the tremblin' sigh, to show
She was dear to us below
On this earth—and *dearer*, even,
When we thought of her a-leavin'!

Sisters prayed, and coted from
Genesis to Kingdom-come
Provin' of her title clear
To the mansions.—"Even *her*,"
*They* claimed, "might be saved, *someway*,
Though she'd danced, and played crowkay,
And wrought on her folks to git her
Fancy shoes that never fit her!"

*Us* to pray fer *Evagene!*—
With her hart as puore and clean
As a rose is after rain
When the sun comes out again!—

What's the use to pray fer *her?*
*She* don't need no prayin' fer!—
  Needed, all her life, more *playin'*
  Than she ever needed prayin'!

I jest thought of all she'd been
Sence her *mother* died, and when
She turned in and done *her* part—
All *her* cares on that child-hart!—
Thought of years she'd slaved—and had
Saved the farm—danced and was glad . . .
  Mayby Him who marks the sporry
  Will smooth down her wings tomorry!

## ON ANY ORDENARY MAN IN A HIGH STATE OF LAUGHTURE AND DELIGHT

As it's give' me to percieve,
I most certin'y believe
When a man's jest glad plum through,
God's pleased with him, same as you.

## TOWN AND COUNTRY

THEY'S a predjudice allus 'twixt country and town
Which I wisht in my hart wasent so.
You take *city* people, jest square up and down,
And they're mighty good people to know:
And whare's better people a-livin', to-day,
Than us in the *country?*—Yit good
As both of us is, we're divorsed, you might say,
And won't compermise when we could!

Now as nigh into town fer yer Pap, ef you please,
Is the what's called the sooburbs.—Fer thare
You'll at least ketch a whiff of the breeze and a sniff
Of the breth of wild-flowrs ev'rywhare.
They's room fer the childern to play, and grow, too—
And to roll in the grass, er to climb
Up a tree and rob nests, like they *ortent* to do,
But they'll do *any*how ev'ry time!

My Son-in-law said, when he lived in the town,
He jest natchurly pined, night and day,
Fer a sight of the woods, er a acre of ground
Whare the trees wasent all cleared away!
And he says to me onc't, whilse a-visitin' us
On the farm, "It's not strange, I declare,
That we can't coax you folks, without raisin' a fuss,
To come to town, visitin' thare!"

And says I, "Then git back whare you sorto' *belong*—
And *Madaline*, too,—and yer three
Little childern," says I, "that don't know a bird-song,
Ner a hawk from a chicky-dee-dee!
Git back," I-says-I, "to the blue of the sky
And the green of the fields, and the shine
Of the sun, with a laugh in yer voice and yer eye
As harty as Mother's and mine!"

Well—long-and-short of it,—he's compermised *some*—
He's moved in the sooburbs.—And now
They don't haf to coax, when they want us to come,
'Cause we turn in and go *anyhow!*

Fer thare—well, they's room fer the songs and
purfume
Of the grove and the old orchurd-ground,
And they's room fer the childern out thare, and
they's room
Fer theyr Gran'pap to waller 'em round!

## LINES FER ISAAC BRADWELL, OF INDANOPLIS, IND., COUNTY-SEAT OF MARION

[Writ on the flyleaf of a volume of the author's poems that come in one of gittin' burnt up in the great Bowen-Merrill's fire of March 17, 1890.]

THROUGH fire and flood this book has passed.—
Fer what?—I hardly dare to ast—
Less'n it's still to pamper me
With extry food fer vanity;—
Fer, sence it's fell in hands as true
As *yourn* is—and a *Hoosier* too,—
I'm prouder of the book, I jing!
Than 'fore they tried to burn the thing!

## DECORATION DAY ON THE PLACE

It's lonesome—sorto' lonesome,—it's a *Sund'y-day*, to
me,
It 'pears-like—more'n any day I nearly ever see!—
Yit, with the Stars and Stripes above, a-flutterin' in the
air,
On ev'ry Soldier's grave I'd love to lay a lilly thare.

They say, though, Decoration Days is giner'ly observed
'Most *ev'rywhares*—espeshally by soldier-boys that's
served.—
But me and Mother's never went—we seldom git
away,—
In p'int o' fact, we're *allus* home on *Decoration Day*.

They say the old boys marches through the streets in
colum's grand,
A-follerin' the old war-tunes they're playin' on the band—

And citizuns all jinin' in—and little childern, too—
All marchin', under shelter of the old Red White and Blue.—

With roses! roses! roses!—ev'rybody in the town!—
And crowds o' little girls in white, jest fairly loaded down!—
Oh! don't THE BOYS know it, from theyr camp acrost the hill?—
Don't they see theyr com'ards comin' and the old flag wavin' still?

Oh! can't they hear the bugul and the rattle of the drum?—
Ain't they no way under heavens they can rickollect us some?
Ain't they no way we can coax 'em, through the roses, jest to say
They know that ev'ry day on earth's theyr Decoration Day?

We've tried that—me and Mother,—whare Elias takes his rest,
In the orchurd—in his uniform, and hands acrost his brest,

And the flag he died fer, smilin' and a-ripplin' in the
breeze
Above his grave—and over that,—*the robin in the trees!*

And *yit* it's lonesome—lonesome!—It's a *Sund'y-day*, to
*me*,
It 'pears-like—more'n any day I nearly ever see!—
Still, with the Stars and Stripes above, a-flutterin' in the
air,
On ev'ry Soldier's grave I'd love to lay a lilly thare.

## THE TREE-TOAD

"'S CUR'OUS-LIKE," said the tree-toad,
"I've twittered fer rain all day;
And I got up soon,
And hollered tel noon—
But the sun, hit blazed away,
Tel I jest clumb down in a crawfish-hole,
Weary at hart, and sick at soul!

"Dozed away fer an hour,
And I tackled the thing agin:
And I sung, and sung,
Tel I knowed my lung
Was jest about give in;
And *then*, thinks I, ef hit don't rain *now*,
They's nothin' in singin', anyhow!

"Onc't in a while some farmer
Would come a-drivin' past;

And he'd hear my cry,
And stop and sigh—
Tel I jest laid back, at last,
And I hollered rain tel I thought my th'oat
Would bust wide open at ever' note!

"But I *fetched* her!—O *I fetched* her!—
'Cause a little while ago,
As I kindo' set,
With one eye shet,
And a-singin' soft and low,
A voice drapped down on my fevered brain,
A-sayin',—'*Ef you'll jest hush I'll rain!*'"

## THE ROSSVILLE LECTUR' COURSE

[Set down from the real facts of the case that come under notice of the author whilse visitun far distunt relatives who wuz then residin' at Rossville, Mich.]

Folks up here at Rossville got up a Lectur' Course:—
All the leadin' citizens they wuz out in force;
Met and talked at Williamses', and 'greed to meet ag'in;
And helt another corkus when the next reports wuz in:
Met ag'in at Samuelses'; and met ag'in at Moore's,
And Johnts putt the shutters up and jest barr'd the doors!—
And yit, I'll jest be dagg-don'd! ef't didn't take a week
'Fore we'd settled whare to write to git a man to speak!

Found out whare the "*Bureau*" wuz; and then and thare agreed
To strike whilse the iron's hot and foller up the lead.—
Simp wuz Secatary; so he tuk his pen in hand,
And ast 'em what they'd tax us fer the one on "Holy Land"—

"One of Colonel J. De-Koombs's Abelust and Best
Lectur's," the circ'lar stated, "Give East er West!"
Wanted fifty dollars and his kyar-fare to and from,
And Simp wuz hence instructed fer to write him not to
come.

Then we talked and jawed around another week er so,
And writ the "*Bureau*" 'bout the town a-bein' sorto'
slow—
Old-fogey-like, and pore as dirt, and lackin' interprise,
And ignornter'n any other, 'cordin' to its size:
Tel finully the "*Bureau*" said they'd send a cheaper man
Fer forty dollars, who would give "A Talk About
Japan"—
"A reg'lar Japanee hise'f," the pamphlet claimed; and
so,
Nobody knowed his languige, and of course we let him
go!

Kindo' then let up a spell—but rallied onc't ag'in,
And writ to price a feller on what's called the "violin"—
A Swede, er Pole, er somepin'—but no matter what he
wuz,
Doc Cooper said he'd heerd him, and he wuzn't wuth a
kuss!

And then we ast fer *Swingse's* terms; and *Cook*, and
*Ingersoll*—
And blame! ef forty dollars looked like anything at all!
And then *Burdette*, we tried fer *him;* and Bob he writ to
say
He wuz busy writin' ortographts and couldn't git away.

At last—along in Aprile—we signed to take this-here
Bill Nye of Californy, 'at wuz posted to appear
"The Comicalest Funny Man 'at Ever Jammed a Hall!"
So we made big preperations, and swep' out the church
and all!
And night he wuz to lectur', and the neghbors all wuz
thare,
And strangers packed along the aisles 'at come from
ev'rywhare,
Committee got a telegrapht the preacher read, 'at run—
"Got off at Rossville, *Indiany*, 'stid of Michigun."

## WHEN THE GREEN GITS BACK IN THE TREES

In Spring, when the green gits back in the trees,
And the sun comes out and *stays*,
And yer boots pulls on with a good tight squeeze,
And you think of yer bare-foot days;
When you *ort* to work and you want to *not*,
And you and yer wife agrees
It's time to spade up the garden-lot,
When the green gits back in the trees—
Well! work is the least o' *my* idees
When the green, you know, gits back in the trees!

When the green gits back in the trees, and bees
Is a-buzzin' aroun' ag'in
In that kind of a lazy go-as-you-please
Old gait they bum roun' in;
When the groun's all bald whare the hay-rick stood,
And the crick's riz, and the breeze

Coaxes the bloom in the old dogwood,
And the green gits back in the trees,—
I like, as I say, in sich scenes as these,
The time when the green gits back in the trees!

When the whole tail-fethers o' Wintertime
Is all pulled out and gone!
And the sap it thaws and begins to climb,
And the swet it starts out on
A feller's forred, a-gittin' down
At the old spring on his knees—
I kindo' like jest a-loaferin' roun'
When the green gits back in the trees—
Jest a-potterin' roun' as I—durn—please—
When the green, you know, gits back in the trees!

## HOW IT HAPPENED

I GOT to *thinkin'* of her—both her parunts dead and
gone—
And all her sisters married off, and none but her and
John
A-livin' all alone thare in that lonesome sorto' way,
And him a blame old bachelor, confirmder ev'ry day!
I'd knowed 'em all, from childern, and theyr daddy from
the time
He settled in the neghborhood, and hadn't ary a dime
Er dollar, when he married, fer to start housekeepin'
on!—
So I got to *thinkin'* of her—both her parunts dead and
gone!

I got to *thinkin'* of her; and a-wundern what *she* done
That all *her sisters* kep' a-gittin' married, one by one,

And her without *no* chances—and the best girl of the
pack—
A' old maid, with her hands, you might say, tied behind
her back!
And *Mother*, too, afore she died,—*she* ust to jest take on,
When none of 'em wuz left, you know, but Evaline and
John,
And jest declare to goodness 'at the young men must be
bline
To not see what a wife they'd git ef they got Evaline!

I got to *thinkin'* of her: In my great affliction she
Wuz sich a comfert to us, and so kind and neghborly,—
She'd come, and leave her housework, fer to he'p out
little Jane,
And talk of *her own* mother 'at she'd never see again—
They'd sometimes *cry* together—though, fer the most
part, she
Would have the child so rickonciled and happy-like 'at we
Felt lonesomer'n ever when she'd putt her bonnet on
And say she'd railly *haf* to be a-gittin' back to John!

I got to *thinkin'* of her, as I say,—and more and more
I'd think of her dependence, and the burdens 'at she
bore,—

Her parunts both a-bein' dead, and all her sisters gone
And married off, and her a-livin' thare alone with John—
You might say jest a-toilin' and a-slavin' out her life
Fer a man 'at hadn't pride enugh to git hisse'f a wife—
'Less some one married *Evaline* and packed her off
some day!—
So I got to *thinkin'* of her—and—It happened *thataway.*

## A DOS'T O' BLUES

I' GOT no patience with blues at all!
And I ust to kindo' talk
Aginst 'em, and claim, tel along last Fall,
They wuz none in the fambly stock;
But a nephew of mine, from Eelinoy,
That visitud us last year,
He kindo' convinct me differunt
Whilse he wuz a-stayin' here.

From ev'ry-which-way that blues is from,
They'd pester him *ev'ry*-ways;
They'd come to him in the night, and come
On Sundys, and rainy days;
They'd tackle him in corn-plantin' time,
And in harvest, and airly Fall,—
But a dos't o' blues in the *Winter*time,
He 'lowed, wuz the worst of all!

Said "All diseases that ever *he* had—
The mumps, er the rhumatiz—
Er ev'ry-other-day-aigger—bad
As ever the blame thing is!—
Er a cyarbuncle, say, on the back of his neck,
Er a felon on his thumb,—
But you keep *the blues* away from him,
And all o' the rest could come!"

And he'd moan, "They's nary a leaf below!
Ner a spear o' grass in sight!
And the whole woodpile's clean under snow!
And the days is dark as night!
You can't go out—ner you can't stay in—
Lay down—stand up—ner set!"
And a tetch o' regular tyfoid-blues
Would double him jest clean shet!

I writ his parunts a postal-kyard
He could stay tel Springtime come;
And Aprile—*first*, as I rickollect—
Wuz the day we shipped him home!
Most o' his *relatives*, sence then,
Has eether give up, er quit,
Er jest died off; but I understand
*He's* the same old color yit!

## THE OLD HOME BY THE MILL

THIS is "The old Home by the Mill"—fer we still call
it so,
Although the *old mill*, roof and sill, is all gone long ago.
The old home, though, and the old folks—the old spring,
and a few
Old cattails, weeds and hartychokes, is left to welcome
you!

Here, Marg'et!—fetch the man a *tin* to drink out of!
Our spring
Keeps kindo'-sorto' cavin' in, but don't "*taste*" any-
thing!
She's kindo' *age*in', Marg'et is—"the *old* process"— like
me,
All ham-stringed up with rhumatiz, and on in seventy-
three.

Jest me and Marg'et lives alone here—like in long ago;
The childern all putt off and gone, and married, don't
you know?
One's millin' 'way out West somewhare; two other miller-
boys
In Minnyopolis they air; and one's in Illinoise.

The *oldest* gyrl—the first that went—married and died
right here;
The next lives in Winn's Settlement—fer purt'-nigh
thirty year!
And youngest one—was allus fer the old home here—
but no!—
Her man turns in and he packs *her* 'way off to Idyho!

I don't miss them like *Marg'et* does—'cause I got *her*,
you see;
And when she pines for them—that's 'cause *she's* only
jest got *me!*
I laugh, and joke her 'bout it all.—But talkin' sense, I'll
say,
When she was tuk so bad last Fall, I laughed then t'other
way!

I hain't so favor'ble impressed 'bout *dyin';* but ef I
Found I was only second-best when *us two* come to die,
I'd 'dopt the "new process" in full, ef *Marg'et* died, you
see,—
I'd jest crawl in my grave and pull the green grass over
me!

## THE WAY IT WUZ

Las' July—and, I persume,
'Bout as hot
As the old Gran'-Jury room
Whare they sot!—
Fight 'twixt Mike and Dock McGreff. . . .
'Pears to me jest like as ef
I'd a-dremp' the whole blame thing—
Allus ha'nts me roun' the gizzard
When they's nightmares on the wing
And a feller's blood's jes' friz!
Seed the row from A to Izzard—
'Cause I wuz a-standin' as clos't to 'em
As me and you is!

Tell you the way it wuz—
And I don't *want* to see,
Like *some* fellers does,
When they's goern to be
Any kind o' fuss—
On'y makes a rumpus wuss

Fer to *interfere*
When theyr dander's riz—
Might as lif to *cheer!*
But I wuz a-standin' as clos't to 'em
As me and you is!

I wuz kindo' strayin'
Past the blame saloon—
Heerd some fiddler playin'
That old "Hee-cup tune!"
I'd *stopped*-like, you know,
Fer a minit er so,
And wuz jest about
Settin' down, when—*Jeemses-whizz!*—
Whole durn winder-sash fell out!
And thare laid Dock McGreff, and Mike
A-straddlin' him, all bloody-like,
And both a-gittin' down to biz!—
And I wuz a-standin' as clos't to 'em
As me and you is!

I wuz the on'y man aroun'—
(Durn old-fogey town!
'Peared more like, to me,
*Sund'y* than *Saturd'y!*)

Dog come 'crost the road
And tuk a smell
And putt right back:
Mishler driv by 'ith a load
O' cantalo'pes he couldn't sell—
Too mad, 'i jack!
To even ast
What wuz up, as he went past!
Weather most outrageous hot!—
Fairly hear it sizz
Roun' Dock and Mike—tel Dock he shot,—
And Mike he slacked that grip o' his
And fell, all spraddled out. Dock riz
'Bout half up, a-spittin' red,
And shuck his head. . . .
And I wuz a-standin' as clos't to 'em
As me and you is!

And Dock he says,
A-whisperin'-like,—
"It hain't no use
A-tryin'!—Mike
He's jest ripped my daylights loose!—
Git that blame-don fiddler to
Let up, and come out here—You

Got some burryin' to do,—
  Mike makes *one*, and, I expects,
'Bout ten seconds, I'll make *two!*"
  And he drapped back, whare he'd riz,
'Crost Mike's body, black and blue,
  Like a great big letter X!—
And I wuz a-standin' as clos't to 'em
    As me and you is!

## PAP'S OLD SAYIN'

PAP had one old-fashioned sayin'
  That I'll never quite fergit—
And they's seven growed-up childern
  Of us rickollects it yit!—
Settin' round the dinner-table,
  Talkin' 'bout our friends, perhaps,
Er abusin' of our neghbors,
  I kin hear them words o' Pap's—
    "Shet up, and eat yer vittels!"

Pap he'd never argy with us,
  Ner cut any subject short
Whilse we all kep' clear o' gossip,
  And wuz actin' as we ort:
But ef we'd git out o' order—
  Like sometimes a fambly is,—
Faultin' folks, er one another,
  Then we'd hear that voice o' his—
    "Shet up, and eat yer vittels!"

Wuz no hand hisse'f at talkin'—
*Never* hadn't *much* to say,—
Only, as I said, pervidin'
When we'd rile him thataway:
Then he'd allus lose his temper
Spite o' fate, and jerk his head
And slam down his caseknife vicious'
Whilse he glared around and said—
"Shet up, and eat yer vittels!"

Mind last time 'at Pap was ailin'
With a misery in his side,
And had hobbled in the kitchen—
Jest the day before he died,—
Laury Jane she ups and tells him,
"Pap, you're pale as pale kin be—
Hain't ye 'feard them-air cowcumbers
Hain't good fer ye?" And says he,
"Shet up, and eat yer vittels!"

Well! I've saw a-many a sorrow,—
Forty year', through thick and thin;
I've got best,—and I've got *wors'ted*,
Time and time and time ag'in!—

But I've met a-many a trouble
That I hain't run onto twice,
Haltin'-like and thinkin' over
Them-air words o' Pap's advice:
"Shet up, and eat yer vittels!"

## ROMANCIN'

I' B'EN a-kindo' "*musin'*," as the feller says, and I'm
About o' the conclusion that they hain't no better time,
When you come to cipher on it, than the times we ust
to know
When we swore our first "*dog-gone-it*" sorto' solum-like
and low!

You git my idy, do you?—*Little* tads, you understand—
Jest a-wishin' thue and thue you that you on'y wuz a
*man.*—
Yit here I am, this minit, even sixty, to a day,
And fergittin' all that's in it, wishin' jest the other way!

I hain't no hand to lectur' on the times, er *dim*onstrate
Whare the trouble is, er hector and domineer with
Fate,—
But when I git so flurried, and so pestered-like and blue,
And so rail owdacious worried, let me tell you what I do!—

I jest gee-haw the hosses, and onhook the swingle-tree,
Whare the hazel-bushes tosses down theyr shadders
over me;
And I draw my plug o' navy, and I climb the fence, and
set
Jest a-thinkin' here, i gravy! tel my eyes is wringin'-wet!

Tho' I still kin see the trouble o' the *presunt*, I kin see—
Kindo' like my sight wuz double—all the things that
*ust* to be;
And the flutter o' the robin and the teeter o' the wren
Sets the willer-branches bobbin' "howdy-do" thum *Now*
to *Then!*

The deadnin' and the thicket's jest a-bilin' full of June,
Thum the rattle o' the cricket, to the yallar-hammer's
tune;
And the catbird in the bottom, and the sapsuck on the
snag,
Seems ef they can't—od-rot 'em!—jest do nothin' else
but brag!

They's music in the twitter of the bluebird and the jay,
And that sassy little critter jest a-*peckin'* all the day;

They's music in the "flicker," and they's music in the thrush,
And they's music in the snicker o' the chipmunk in the brush!

They's music *all around* me!—And I go back, in a dream
Sweeter yit than ever found me fast asleep,—and in the stream
That ust to split the medder whare the dandylions growed,
I stand knee-deep, and redder than the sunset down the road.

Then's when I' b'en a-fishin'!—And they's other fellers, too,
With theyr hick'ry-poles a-swishin' out behind 'em; and a few
Little "shiners" on our stringers, with theyr tails tip-toein' bloom,
As we dance 'em in our fingers all the happy jurney home.

I kin see us, true to Natur', thum the time we started out,
With a biscuit and a 'tater in our little "roundabout"!—

I kin see our lines a-tanglin', and our elbows in a jam,
And our naked legs a-danglin' thum the apern o' the dam.

I kin see the honeysuckle climbin' up around the mill,
And kin hear the worter chuckle, and the wheel a-growlin' still;
And thum the bank below it I kin steal the old canoe,
And jest git in and row it like the miller ust to do.

W'y, I git my fancy focussed on the past so mortul plane
I kin even smell the locus'-blossoms bloomin' in the lane;
And I hear the cow-bells clinkin' sweeter tunes 'n "Money-musk"
Fer the lightnin'-bugs a-blinkin' and a-dancin' in the dusk.

And when I've kep' on "musin'," as the feller says, tel I'm
Firm-fixed in the conclusion that they hain't no better time,
When you come to cipher on it, than the *old* times,—I de-clare
I kin wake and say "dog-gone-it!" jest as soft as any prayer!

# AN OLD SETTLER'S STORY

## AN OLD SETTLER'S STORY

WILLIAM WILLIAMS his name was—er so he said;—Bill Williams they called him, and them 'at knowed him best called him Bill Bills.

The first I seed o' Bills was about two weeks after he got here. The Settlement wasn't nothin' but a baby in them days, fer I mind 'at old Ezry Sturgiss had jist got his saw and griss-mill a-goin', and Bills had come along and claimed to know all about millin', and got a job with him; and millers in them times was wanted worse'n congerssmen, and I reckon got better wages; fer afore Ezry built, there wasn't a dust o' meal er flour to be had short o' the White Water, better'n sixty mil'd from here, the way we had to fetch it. And they used to come to Ezry's fer their grindin' as fur as that; and one feller I knowed to come from what used to be the old South Fork, over eighty mil'd from here, and in the wettest, rainyest weather; and mud! *Law!*

Well, this-here Bills was a-workin' fer Ezry at the time —part the time a-grindin', and part the time a-lookin' after the sawin', and gittin' out timber and the like. Bills was a queer-lookin' feller, shore! About as tall a build man as Tom Carter—but of course you don't know nothin' o' Tom Carter. A great big hulk of a feller, Tom was; and as fur back as Fifty-eight used to make his brags that he could cut and putt up his seven cord a day.

Well, what give Bills this queer look, as I was a-goin' on to say, was a great big ugly scar a-runnin' from the corner o' one eye clean down his face and neck, and I don't know how fur down his breast—awful lookin'; and he never shaved, and there wasn't a hair a-growin' in that scar, and it looked like a—some kind o' pizen snake er somepin' a-crawlin' in the grass and weeds. I never seed sich a' out-and-out ornry-lookin' chap, and I'll never fergit the first time I set eyes on him.

Steve and me—Steve was my youngest brother; Steve's be'n in Californy now fer, le' me see,—well, anyways, I rickon, over thirty year.—Steve was a-drivin' the team at the time—I allus let Steve drive; 'peared like Steve was made a-purpose fer hosses. The beatin'est hand with hosses 'at ever you *did* see and-I-know! W'y, a hoss, after he got kindo' used to Steve a-handlin' of him, would do anything fer *him!* And I've knowed that boy

to swap fer hosses 'at couldn't hardly make a shadder; and, afore you knowed it, Steve would have 'em a-cavortin' around a-lookin' as peert and fat and slick!

Well, we'd come over to Ezry's fer some grindin' that day; and Steve wanted to price some lumber fer a house, intendin' to marry that Fall—and would a-married, I reckon, ef the girl hadn't a-died jist as she'd got her weddin' clothes done—and that set hard on Steve fer a while. Yit he rallied, you know, as a youngster will; but he never married, someway—never married. Reckon he never found no other woman he could love well enough —'less it was—well, no odds.—The Good Bein's jedge o' what's best fer each and all.

We lived *then* about eight mil'd from Ezry's, and it tuck about a day to make the trip; so you kin kindo' git an idy o' how the roads was in them days.

Well, on the way over I noticed Steve was mighty quietlike, but I didn't think nothin' of it, tel at last he says, says he, "Ben, I want you to kindo' keep an eye out fer Ezry's new hand"—meanin' Bills. And then I kindo' suspicioned somepin' o' nother was up betwixt 'em; and shore enough there was, as I found out afore the day was over.

I knowed 'at Bills was a mean sort of a man, from what I'd heerd. His name was all over the neighberhood afore he'd be'n here two weeks.

In the first place, he come in a suspicious sorto' way: Him and his wife, and a little baby on'y a few months old, come through in a kivvered wagon with a fambly a-goin' som'ers in The Illinoy; and they stopped at the mill, fer some meal er somepin', and Bills got to talkin' with Ezry 'bout millin', and one thing o' nother, and said he was expeerenced some 'bout a mill hisse'f, and told Ezry ef he'd give him work he'd stop; said his wife and baby wasn't strong enough to stand trav'lin', and ef Ezry'd give him work he was ready to lick into it then and there; said his woman could pay her board by sewin' and the like, tel they got ahead a little; and then, ef he liked the neighberhood, he said he'd as lif settle there as anywheres; he was huntin' a home, he said, and the outlook kindo' struck him, and his woman railly needed rest, and wasn't strong enough to go much furder. And old Ezry kindo' tuk pity on the feller; and havin' house-room to spare, and railly in need of a good hand at the mill, he said all right; and so the feller stopped and the wagon druv ahead and left 'em; and they didn't have no things ner nothin'—not even a cyarpet-satchel, ner a stitch o' clothes, on'y what they had on their backs. And I think it was the third er fourth day after Bills stopped 'at he whirped Tomps Burk, the bully o' here them days, tel you wouldn't a-knowed him!

Well, I'd heerd o' this, and the facts is I'd made up my mind 'at Bills was a bad stick, and the place wasn't none the better fer his bein' here. But, as I was a-goin' on to say,—as Steve and me driv up to the mill, I ketched sight o' Bills the first thing, a-lookin' out o' where some boards was knocked off, jist over the worter-wheel; and he knowed Steve—I could see that by his face; and he hollered somepin', too, but what it was I couldn't jist make out, fer the noise o' the wheel; but he looked to me as ef he'd hollered somepin' mean a-purpose so's Steve *wouldn't* hear it, and *he'd* have the consolation o' knowin' 'at he'd called Steve some ornry name 'thout givin' him a *chance* to take it up. Steve was allus quiet-like, but ef you raised his dander onc't—and you could do that 'thout much trouble, callin' him names er somepin', particular' anything 'bout his mother. Steve loved his mother—allus loved his mother, and would fight fer her at the drap o' the hat. And he was her favo-*rite*—allus a-talkin' o' "her boy, Steven," as she used to call him, and so proud of him, and so keerful of him allus, when he'd be sick or anything; nuss him like a baby, she would.

So when Bills hollered, Steve didn't pay no attention; and *I* said nothin', o' course, and didn't let on like I noticed him. So we druv round to the south side and

hitched; and Steve 'lowed he'd better feed; so I left him with the hosses and went into the mill.

They was jist a-stoppin' fer dinner. Most of 'em brought ther dinners—lived so fur away, you know. The two Smith boys lived on what used to be the old Warrick farm, five er six mild, anyhow, from where the mill stood. Great stout fellers, they was; and little Jake, the father of 'em, wasn't no man at all—not much bigger'n you, I rickon. Le' me see, now:—There was Tomps Burk, Wade Elwood, and Joe and Ben Carter; and Wesley Morris, John Coke—wiry little cuss, he was, afore he got his leg sawed off;—and Ezry, and—Well, I don't jist mind *all* the boys —'s a long time ago, and I never was much of a hand fer names.—Now, some folks'll hear a name and never fergit it, but I can't boast of a good rickollection, 'specially o' names; and fer the last thirty year my mem'ry's be'n a-failin' me, ever sence a spell o' fever 'at I brought on onc't—fever and rheumatiz together:—You see, I went a-sainin' with a passel o' the boys, fool-like, and let my clothes freeze on me a-comin' home. W'y, my breeches was like stove-pipes when I pulled 'em off. 'Ll, ef I didn't pay fer *that* spree! Rheumatiz got a holt o' me and helt me there flat o' my back fer eight weeks, and couldn't move hand er foot 'thout a-hollerin' like a' Injun. And I'd a-be'n there yit, I rickon, ef it hadn't a-be'n fer

a' old hoss-doctor, name o' Jones; and he gits a lot o' sod and steeps it in hot whiskey and pops it on me,—and I'll-be-switched-to-death ef it didn't cuore me up, fer all I laughed and told him I'd better take the whiskey in'ardly and let him keep the grass fer his doctor bill. But that's nuther here ner there!—As I was a-sayin' 'bout the mill: As I went in, the boys had stopped work and was a-gittin' down their dinners, and Bills amongst 'em, and old Ezry a-chattin' away—great hand, he was, fer his joke, and allus a-cuttin' up and a-gittin' off his odd-come-shorts on the boys. And that day he was in particular good humor. He'd brought some liquor down fer the boys, and he'd be'n drinkin' a little hisse'f, enough to feel it. He didn't drink much—that is to say, he didn't git drunk adzactly; but he tuk his dram, you understand. You see, they made their own whiskey in them days, and it wasn't nothin' like the bilin' stuff you git now. Old Ezry had a little still, and allus made his own whiskey, enough fer fambly use, and jist as puore as worter, and as harmless. But now-a-days the liquor you git's rank pizen. They say they putt tobacker in it, and strychnine, and the Lord knows what; ner I never knowed why, 'less it was to give it a richer-lookin' flavor, like. Well, Ezry he'd brought up a jug, and the boys had be'n a-takin' it purty free; I seed that as quick as I went in. And old Ezry called out

to *me* to come and take some, the first thing. Told him I didn't b'lieve I keered about it; but nothin' would do but I must take a drink with the boys; and I was tired anyhow and I thought a little wouldn't hurt; so I takes a swig; and as I set the jug down *Bills* spoke up and says, "You're a stranger to me, and I'm a stranger to you, but I rickon we can drink to our better acquaintance,"—er somepin' to that amount, and poured out another snifter in a gourd he'd be'n a-drinkin' coffee in, and handed it to me. Well, I couldn't well refuse, of course; so I says "Here's to us," and drunk her down—mighty nigh a half pint, I rickon. Now, I railly didn't want it, but, as I tell you, I was obleeged to take it, and I downed her at a swaller and never batted an eye, fer, to tell the fact about it, I liked the taste o' liquor; and I do *yit*, on'y I know when I' got enough. Jist then I didn't want to drink on account o' Steve. Steve couldn't abide liquor in no shape ner form—fer medicine ner nothin', and I've allus thought it was his mother's doin's.

Now, a few months afore this I'd be'n to Vincennes, and I was jist a-tellin' Ezry what they was a-astin' fer their liquor there—fer I'd fetched a couple o' gallon home with me 'at I'd paid six bits fer, and pore liquor at that: And I was a-tellin' about it, and old Ezry was a-sayin' what an oudacious figger that was, and how he could

make money a-sellin' it fer half that price, and was a-goin' on a-braggin' about his liquor—and it was a good article—fer new whiskey,—and jist then Steve comes in, jist as Bills was a-sayin' 'at a man 'at wouldn't drink *that* whiskey wasn't no man at all! So, of course, when they ast *Steve* to take some and he told 'em no, 'at he was much obleeged, Bills was kindo' tuk down, you understand, and had to say somepin'; and says he, "I reckon you ain't no better'n the rest of us, and *we've* be'n a-drinkin' of it." But Steve didn't let on like he noticed Bills at all, and retch and shuk hands with the other boys and ast how they was all a-comin' on.

I seed Bills was riled, and more'n likely wanted trouble; and shore enough, he went on to say, kindo' snarlin'-like, 'at "he'd knowed o' men in his day 'at had be'n licked fer refusin' to drink when their betters ast 'em"; and said furder 'at "a lickin' wasn't none too good fer anybody 'at would refuse liquor like that o' Ezry's, and in his own house too"—er *buildin'*, ruther. Ezry shuk his head at him, but I seed 'at Bills was bound fer a quarrel, and I winks at Steve, as much as to say, "Don't you let him bully you; you'll find your brother here to see you have fair play!" *I* was a-feelin' my oats some about then, and Steve seed I was, and looked so sorry-like, and like his mother, 'at I jist thought, "I *kin* fight

fer *you*, and *die* fer you, 'cause you're wuth it!"—And I didn't someway feel like it would amount to much ef I *did* die er git killed er somepin' on *his* account. I seed Steve was mighty white around the mouth, and his eyes was a-glitterin' like a snake's; yit Bills didn't seem to take warnin', but went on to say 'at "he'd knowed boys 'at loved their mothers so well they couldn't drink nothin' stronger'n milk."—And then you'd ort o' seed Steve's coat fly off, jist like it wanted to git out of his way and give the boy room accordin' to his stren'th. I seed Bills grab a piece o' scantlin' jist in time to ketch his arm as he struck at Steve,—fer Steve was a-comin' fer him dangerss. But they'd ketched Steve from behind jist then; and Bills turned fer me. I seed him draw back, and I seed Steve a-scufflin' to ketch his arm; but he didn't reach it quite in time to do me no good. It must a-come awful suddent. The first I rickollect was a roarin' and a buzzin' in my ears, and when I kindo' come a little better to, and crawled up and peeked over the saw-log I was a-layin' the other side of, I seed a couple clinched and a-rollin' over and over and a-makin' the chips and saw-dust fly, now I *tell* you! Bills and Steve it was—head and tail, tooth and toe-nail, and a-bleedin' like good fellers! I seed a gash o' some kind in Bills's head, and Steve was purty well tuckered and a-pantin' like a lizard;

and I made a rush in, and one o' the Carter boys grabbed me and told me to jist keep cool—'at *Steve* didn't need no he'p, and they might need me to keep Bills's friends off ef *they* made a rush. By this time Steve had whirlt Bills, and was a-jist a-gittin' in a fair way to finish him up in good style, when Wesley Morris run in—I seed him do it—run in, and afore we could ketch him he struck Steve a deadener in the butt o' the ear and knocked him as limber as a rag. And then Bills whirlt Steve and got him by the th'oat, and Ben Carter and me and old Ezry closed in.—Carter tackled Morris, and Ezry and me grabs Bills—and as old Ezry grabbed him to pull him off, Bills kindo' give him a side swipe o' some kind and knocked him—I don't know *how* fur! And jist then Carter and Morris come a-scufflin' back'ards right amongst us, and Carter th'owed him right acrost Bills and Steve. Well, it ain't fair, and I don't like to tell it, but I seed it was the last chance and I tuk advantage of it:—As Wesley and Ben fell it pulled Bills down in a kindo' twist, don't you understand, so's he couldn't he'p hisse'f, yit still a-clinchin' Steve by the th'oat, and him black in the face.—Well, as they fell I grabbed up a little hick'ry limb, not bigger'n my two thumbs, and I struck Bills a little tap kindo' over the back of his head like, and, blame me! ef he didn't keel over like a stuck pig—and

not any too soon, nuther,—fer he had Steve's chunk as nigh putt out as you ever seed a man's, to come to agin. But he was up th'reckly and ready to a-went at it ef Bills could a-come to the scratch; but Mister Bills he wasn't in no fix to try it over! After a-waitin' a while fer him to come to, and him not a-comin' to, we concluded 'at we'd better he'p him, maybe. And we worked with him, and warshed him, and drenched him with whiskey, but it 'peared like it wasn't no use.—He jist laid there with his eyes about half shet, and a-breathin' like a hoss when he's bad sceart; and I'll be dad-limbed ef I don't believe he'd a-*died* on our hands ef it hadn't a-happened old Doc Zions come a-ridin' past on his way home from the Murdock neighberhood, where they was a-havin' sich a time with the milk-sick. And he examined Bills, and had him laid on a plank and carried down to the house—'bout a mil'd, I reckon, from the mill. Looked kindo' cur'ous to see Steve a-he'ppin' pack the feller, after his nearly chokin' him to death. Oh, it was a bloody fight, I tell you! W'y, they wasn't a man in the mill 'at didn't have a black eye er somepin'; and old Ezry, where Bills hit him, had his nose broke, and was as bloody as a butcher. And you'd ort a-seed the women-folks when our p'session come a-bringin' Bills in. I never seed anybody take on like Bills's woman.—It was distressin'; it was, indeed.—Went

into hysterics, she did; and we thought fer a while she'd gone plum crazy, fer she cried so pitiful over him, and called him "Charley! Charley!" 'stid of his right name, and went on, clean out of her head, tel she finally jist fainted clean away.

Fer three weeks Bills laid betwixt life and death, and that woman set by him night and day, and tended him as patient as a' angel—and she *was* a' angel, too; and he'd a-never lived to bother nobody agin ef it hadn't a-be'n fer Annie, as he called her. Zions said there was a 'brazure of the—some kind o' p'tuber'nce, and ef he'd a-be'n struck jist a quarter of a' inch below—jist a quarter of a' inch—he'd a-be'n a dead man. And I've sence wished—not 'at I want the life of a human bein' to account fer—on'y,—well, no odds—I've sence wished 'at I *had* a-hit him jist a quarter of a' inch below!

Well, of course, them days they wasn't no law o' no account, and nothin' was ever done about it. So Steve and me got our grindin', and talked the matter over with Ezry and the boys. Ezry said he was a-goin' to do all he could fer Bills, 'cause he was a good hand, and when he wasn't drinkin' they wasn't no peaceabler man in the Settlement. I kindo' suspicioned what was up, but I said nothin' then. And Ezry said furder, as we was about drivin' off, that Bills was a despert feller, and it

was best to kindo' humor him a little. "And you must kindo' be on your guard," he says, "and I'll watch him, and ef anything happens 'at I git wind of I'll let you know," he says; and so we putt out fer home.

Mother tuk on awful about it. You see, she thought she'd be'n the whole blame of it, 'cause the Sundy afore that her and Steve had went to meetin', and they got there late, and the house was crowded, and Steve had ast Bills to give up his seat to Mother, and he wouldn't do it, and said somepin' 'at disturbed the prayin', and the preacher prayed 'at the feller 'at was a-makin' the disturbance might be forgive'; and that riled Bills so he got up and left, and hung around till it broke up, so's he could git a chance at Steve to pick a fight. And he did *try* it, and dared Steve and double-dared him fer a fight, but Mother begged so hard 'at she kep' him out of it. Steve said 'at he'd a-told me all about it on the way to Ezry's, on'y he'd promised Mother, you know, not to say nothin' to me.

Ezry was over at our house about six weeks after the fight, appearantly as happy as you please. We ast him how him and Bills was a-makin' it, and he said firstrate; said 'at Bills was jist a-doin' splendid; said he'd got moved in his new house 'at he'd fixed up fer him, and

ever'thing was a-goin' on as smooth as could be; and Bills and the boys was on better terms'n ever; and says he, "As fur as you and Steve's concerned, Bills don't 'pear to bear you no ill feelin's, and says as fur as he's concerned the thing's settled." "Well," says I, "Ezry, I hope so; but I can't he'p but think they's somepin' at the bottom of all this"; and says I, "I don't think it's in Bills to ever amount to anything good"; and says I, "It's my opinion they's a dog in the well, and now you mark it!"

Well, he said he *wasn't* jist easy, but maybe he'd come out all right; said he couldn't turn the feller off—he hadn't the heart to do that, with that-air pore, dilicate woman o' his, and the baby. And then he went on to tell what a smart sorto' woman Bills's wife was,—one of the nicest little women he'd ever laid eyes on, said she was; said she was the kindest thing, and the sweetest-tempered, and all—and the handiest woman 'bout the house, and 'bout sewin', and cookin', and the like, and all kinds o' housework; and so good to the childern, and all; and how they all got along so well; and how proud she was of her baby, and allus a-goin' on about it and a-cryin' over it and a-carryin' on, and wouldn't leave it out of her sight a minute. And Ezry said 'at she could write so purty, and made sich purty pictur's fer the childern;

and how they all liked her better'n their own mother. And, sence she'd moved, he said it seemed so lonesome-like 'thout *her* about the house—like they'd lost one o' their own fambly; said they didn't git to see her much now, on'y sometimes, when her man would be at work, she'd run over fer a while, and kiss all the childern and women-folks about the place,—the greatest hand fer the childern, she was; tell 'em all sorts o' little stories, you know, and sing fer 'em; said 'at she could sing so sweet-like, 'at time and time agin she'd break clean down in some song o' nother, and her voice would trimble so mournful-like 'at you'd find yourse'f a-cryin' afore you knowed it. And she used to coax Ezry's woman to let her take the childern home with her; and they used to allus want to go, tel Bills come onc't while they was there, and they said he got to jawin' her fer a-makin' some to-do over the baby, and swore at her and tuk it away from her and whirped it fer cryin', and *she* cried and told him to whirp her and not little Annie, and he said that was jist what he *was* a-doin'. And the childern was allus afeard to go there any more after that—'feard he'd come home and whirp little Annie agin. Ezry said he jist done that to skeer 'em away—'cause he didn't want a passel o' childern a-whoopin' and a-howlin' and a-trackin' round the house all the time.

But, shore enough, Bills, after the fight, 'peared like he'd settled down, and went 'bout his business so stiddy-like, and worked so well, the neighbers begin to think he was all right after all, and railly *some* got to *likin'* him. But fer *me*,—well, I was a leetle slow to argy 'at the feller wasn't "a-possumin'." But the next time I went over to the mill—and Steve went with me—old Ezry come and met us, and said 'at Bills didn't have no hard feelin's ef *we* didn't, and 'at he wanted us to fergive him; said 'at Bills wanted him to tell us 'at he was sorry the way he'd acted, and wanted us to fergive him. Well, I looked at Ezry, and we both looked at him, jist perfectly tuk back—the idee o' Bills a-wantin' anybody to *fergive him!* And says I, "Ezry, what in the name o' common sense do you mean?" And says he, "I mean jist what I say; Bills jined meetin' last night and had 'em all a-prayin' fer him; and we all had *a glorious time*," says old Ezry; "and his woman was there and jined, too, and prayed and shouted and tuk on to beat all; and Bills got up and spoke and give in his experience, and said he'd be'n a bad man, but, glory to God, them times was past and gone; said 'at he wanted all of 'em to pray fer him, and he wanted to prove faithful, and wanted all his inemies to fergive him; and prayed 'at you and Steve and your folks would fergive him, and ever'body 'at he

ever wronged anyway." And old Ezry was a-goin' on, and his eyes a-sparklin', and a-rubbin' his hands, he was so excited and tickled over it, 'at Steve and me we jist stood there a-gawkin' like, tel Bills hisse'f come up and retch out one hand to Steve and one to me; and Steve shuk with him kindo' oneasy-like, and I—well, sir, I never felt cur'oser in my born days than I did that minute. The cold chills crep' over me, and I shuk as ef I had the agur, and I folded my hands behind me and I looked that feller square in the eye, and I tried to speak three or four times afore I could make it, and when I did, my voice wasn't natchurl—sounded like a feller a-whisperin' through a tin horn er somepin'.—And I says, says I, "You're a liar," slow and delibert. That was all. His eyes blazed a minute, and drapped; and he turned, 'thout a word, and walked off. And Ezry says, "He's in airnest; I know he's in airnest, er he'd a-never a-tuk that!" And so he went on, tel finally Steve jined in, and betwixt 'em they p'suaded me 'at I was in the wrong and the best thing to do was to make it all up, which I finally did. And Bills said 'at he'd a-never a-felt jist right 'thout *my* friendship, fer he'd wronged me, he said, and he'd wronged Steve and Mother, too, and he wanted a chance, he said, o' makin' things straight agin.

Well, a-goin' home, I don't think Steve and me talked o'

nothin' else but Bills—how airnest the feller acted 'bout it, and how, ef he *wasn't* in airnest, he'd a-never a-swallered that "lie," you see. That's what walked my log, fer he could a-jist as easy a-knocked me higher'n Kilgore's kite as he could to walk away 'thout a-doin' of it.

Mother was awful tickled when she heerd about it, fer she'd had an idee 'at we'd have trouble afore we got back, and a-gitten home safe, and a-bringin' the news 'bout Bills a-jinin' church and all, tickled her so 'at she mighty nigh shouted fer joy. You see, Mother was a' old church-member all her life; and I don't think she ever missed a sermont er a prayer-meetin' 'at she could possibly git to—rain er shine, wet er dry. When they was a meetin' of any kind a-goin' on, go she would, and nothin' short o' sickness in the fambly, er knowin' nothin' of it, would stop *her!* And clean up to her dyin' day she was a God-fearin' and consistent Christian ef they ever was one. I mind now when she was tuk with her last spell and laid bedfast fer eighteen months, she used to tell the preacher, when he'd come to see her and pray and go on, 'at she could die happy ef she could on'y be with 'em all agin in their love-feasts and revivals. She was purty low then, and had be'n a-failin' fast fer a day er two; and that day they'd be'n a-holdin' service at the house. It was her request, you know, and the neighbers

had congergated and was a-prayin' and a-singin' her favorite hymns—one in p'tickler, "God moves in a myster'ous way his wunders to p'form," and 'bout his "Walkin' on the sea and a-ridin' of the storm."—Well, anyway, they'd be'n a-singin' that hymn fer her—she used to sing that'n so much, I rickollect as fur back as I kin remember; and I mind how it used to make me feel so lonesome-like and solemn, don't you know,—when I'd be a-knockin' round the place along o' evenings, and she'd be a-milkin', and I'd hear her, at my feedin', way off by myse'f, and it allus somehow made me feel like a feller'd ort 'o try and live as nigh right as the law allows, and that's about my doctern yit. Well, as I was a-goin' on to say, they'd jist finished that old hymn, and Granny Lowry was jist a-goin' to lead in prayer, when I noticed Mother kindo' tried to turn herse'f in bed, and smiled so weak and faint-like, and looked at me, with her lips a-kindo' movin'; and I thought maybe she wanted another dos't of her syrup 'at Ezry's woman had fixed up fer her, and I kindo' stooped down over her and ast her ef she wanted anything. "Yes," she says, and nodded, and her voice sounded so low and solemn and so fur-away-like 'at I knowed she'd never take no more medicine on this airth. And I tried to ast her what it was she wanted, but I couldn't say nothin'; my throat hurt me, and I felt the

warm tears a-boolgin' up, and her kind old face a-glimmerin' away so pale-like afore my eyes, and still a-smilin' up so lovin' and forgivin' and so good 'at it made me think so fur back in the past I seemed to be a little boy agin; and seemed like her thin gray hair was brown and a-shinin' in the sun as it used to do when she helt me on her shoulder in the open door, when Father was a-livin' and we used to go to meet him at the bars; seemed like her face was young agin, and a-smilin' like it allus used to be, and her eyes as full o' hope and happiness as afore they ever looked on grief er ever shed a tear. And I thought of all the trouble they had saw on my account, and of all the lovin' words her lips had said, and of all the thousand things her pore old hands had done fer me 'at I never even thanked her fer; and how I loved her better'n all the world besides, and would be so lonesome ef she went away.—Lord! I can't tell you what I *didn't* think and feel and see. And I knelt down by her, and she whispered then fer Steven, and he come, and we kissed her —and she died—a-smilin' like a child—jist like a child.

Well—well! 'Pears like I'm allus a-runnin' into somepin' else. I wisht I *could* tell a story 'thout driftin' off in matters 'at hain't no livin' thing to do with what I started out with. I try to keep from thinkin' of afflictions and the like, 'cause sich is bound to come to the

best of us; but a feller's rickollection will bring 'em up, and I reckon it'd ort'o be er it wouldn't be; and I've thought, sometimes, it was done maybe to kindo'. admonish a feller, as the Good Book says, of how good a world'd be 'thout no sorrow in it.

Where was I? Oh, yes, I rickollect;—about Bills a-jinin' church. Well, sir, they wasn't a better-actin' feller and more religious-like in all the neighberhood. Spoke in meetin's, he did, and tuk a' active part in all religious doin's, and, in fact, was jist as square a man, appearantly, as the preacher hisse'f. And about six er eight weeks after he'd jined, they got up another revival, and things run high. They was a big excitement, and ever'body was a'tendin' from fur and near. Bills and Ezry got the mill-hands to go, and didn't talk o' nothin' *but* religion. People thought awhile 'at old Ezry'd turn preacher, he got so interested 'bout church matters. He was easy excited 'bout anything; and when he went into a thing it was in dead airnest, shore!—"jist flew off the handle," as I heerd a comical feller git off onc't. And him and Bills was up and at it ever' night—prayin' and shoutin' at the top o' their voice. Them railly did seem like good times—when ever'body jined together, and prayed and shouted ho-sanner, and danced around together, and hugged each other like they was so full o'

glory they jist couldn't he'p theirse'v's!—That's the reason *I* jined; it looked so kindo' whole-souled-like and good, you understand. But law! I didn't hold out—on'y fer a little while, and no wunder!

Well, about them times Bills was tuk down with the agur; first got to chillin' ever'-other-day, then *ever'* day, and harder and harder, tel sometimes he'd be obleeged to stay away from meetin' on account of it. And onc't I was at meetin' when he told about it, and how when he couldn't be with 'em he allus prayed at home, and he said 'at he believed his prayers was answered, fer onc't he'd prayed fer a new outpourin' of the Holy Sperit, and that very night they was three new jiners. And another time he said 'at he'd prayed 'at Wesley Morris would jine, and lo and behold you! he *did* jine, and the very night 'at he *prayed* he would.

Well, the night I'm a-speakin' of he'd had a chill the day afore and couldn't go that night, and was in bed when Ezry druv past fer him; said he'd like to go, but had a high fever and couldn't. And then Ezry's woman ast him ef he was too sick to spare Annie; and he said no, they could take her and the baby: and told her to fix his medicine so's he could reach it 'thout gittin' out o' bed, and he'd git along 'thout her. And so she tuk the baby and went along with Ezry and his folks.

I was at meetin' that night and rickollect 'em comin' in. Annie got a seat jist behind me—Steve give her his'n and stood up; and I rickollect a-astin' her how Bills was a-gittin' along with the agur; and little Annie, the baby, kep' a-pullin' my hair and a-crowin' tel finally she went to sleep; and Steve ast her mother to let *him* hold her—cutest little thing you ever laid eyes on, and the very pictur' *of* her mother.

Old Daddy Barker preached that night, and a mighty good sermont. His text, ef I rickollect right, was "workin' out your own salvation"; and when I listen to preachers nowadays in their big churches and their fine pulpits, I allus think o' Daddy Barker, and kindo' some way wisht the old times could come agin, with the old log meetin'-house with its puncheon-floor, and the chinkin' in the walls, and old Daddy Barker in the pulpit. He'd make you feel 'at the Lord could make Hisse'f at home there, and find jist as abundant comfort in the old log house as He could in any of your fine-furnished churches 'at you can't set down in 'thout payin' fer the privilege, like it was a theatre.

Ezry had his two little girls jine that night, and I rickollect the preacher made sich a purty prayer about the Saviour a-cotin' from the Bible 'bout "Suffer little childern to come unto Me"—and all; and talked so purty

'bout the jedgment day, and mothers a-meetin' their little ones there—and all; and went on tel they wasn't a dry eye in the house—And jist as he was a-windin' up, Abe Riggers stuck his head in at the door and hollered "Fire!" loud as he could yell. We all rushed out, a-thinkin' it was the meetin'-house; but he hollered it was the mill; and shore enough, away off to the south'ards we could see the light acrost the woods, and see the blaze a-lickin' up above the trees. I seed old Ezry as he come a-scufflin' through the crowd; and we putt out together fer it. Well, it was two mil'd to the mill, but by the time we'd half-way got there, we could tell it wasn't the mill a-burnin', 'at the fire was furder to the left, and that was Ezry's house; and by the time we got there it wasn't much use. We pitched into the household goods, and got out the beddin', and the furnitur' and cheers, and the like o' that; saved the clock and a bedstid, and got the bureau purt' nigh out when they hollered to us 'at the roof was a-cavin' in, and we had to leave it; well, we'd tuk the drawers out, all but the big one, and that was locked; and it and all in it went with the buildin'; and that was a big loss: All the money 'at Ezry was a-layin' by was in that-air drawer, and a lot o' keepsakes and trinkets 'at Ezry's woman said she wouldn't a-parted with fer the world and all.

I never seed a troubleder fambly than they was. It jist 'peared like old Ezry give clean down, and the women and childern a-cryin' and a-takin' on. It looked jist awful—shore's you're born!—Losin' ever'thing they'd worked so hard fer—and there it was, purt' nigh midnight, and a fambly, jist a little while ago all so happy, and now with no home to go to, ner nothin'!

It was arranged fer Ezry's to move in with Bills—that was about the on'y chance—on'y one room and a loft; but Bills said they could manage *some* way, fer a while anyhow.

Bills said he seed the fire when it first started, and could a-putt it out ef he'd on'y be'n strong enough to git there; said he started twic't to go, but was too weak and had to go back to bed agin; said it was a-blazin' in the kitchen roof when he first seed it. So the gineral conclusion 'at we all come to was—it must a-ketched from the flue.

It was too late in the Fall then to think o' buildin' even the onriest kind o' shanty, and so Ezry moved in with Bills. And Bills used to say ef it hadn't a-be'n fer Ezry *he'd* a-never a-had no house, ner nothin' to putt in it, nuther! You see, all the household goods 'at Bills had in the world he'd got of Ezry, and he 'lowed he'd be

a triflin' whelp ef he didn't do all in *his* power to make *Ezry* perfeckly at home's long as he wanted to stay there. And together they managed to make room fer 'em all, by a-buildin' a kindo' shed-like to the main house, intendin' to build when Spring come. And ever'thing went along first-rate, I guess; never heerd no complaints —that is, p'tickler.

Ezry was kindo' down fer a long time, though; didn't like to talk about his trouble much, and didn't 'tend meetin' much, like he used to; said it made him think 'bout his house burnin', and he didn't feel safe to lose sight o' the mill. And the meetin's kindo' broke up altogether that winter. Almost broke up religious doin's, it did. 'S long as I've lived here I never seed jist sich a slack in religion as they was that winter; and 'fore *then*, I kin mind the time when they wasn't a night the whole endurin' winter when they didn't have preachin' er prayer-meetin' o' some kind a-goin' on. W'y, I rickollect one night in p'tickler—the *coldest* night, *whooh!* And somebody had stold the meetin'-house door, and they was obleeged to preach 'thout it. And the wind blowed in so they had to hold their hats afore the candles, and then onc't-in-a-while they'd git sluffed out. And the snow drifted in so it was jist like settin' out doors; and they had to stand up when they prayed—yes-sir! stood

up to pray. I noticed that night they was a' oncommon lot o' jiners, and I believe to this day 'at most of 'em jined jist to git up where the stove was. Lots o' folks had their feet froze right in meetin'; and Steve come home with his ears froze like they was whittled out o' bone; and he said 'at Mary Madaline Wells's feet was froze, and she had two pair o' socks on over her shoes. Oh, it *was* cold, now I *tell* you!

They run the mill part o' that winter—part they couldn't. And they didn't work to say stiddy tel along in Aprile, and then they was snow on the ground yit—in the shadders—and the ground froze, so you couldn't hardly dig a grave. But at last they got to kindo' jiggin' along agin. Plenty to do there was; and old Ezry was mighty tickled, too; 'peared to recruit right up like. Ezry was allus best tickled when things was a-stirrin', and then he was a-gittin' ready fer buildin', you know,—wanted a house of his own, he said.—And of course it wasn't adzackly like home, all cluttered up as they was there at Bills's. They got along mighty well, though, together; and the women-folks and childern got along the best in the world. Ezry's woman used to say she never laid eyes on jist sich another woman as Annie was. Said it was jist as good as a winter's schoolin' fer the childern; said her two little girls had learnt to read, and

didn't know their a-b abs afore Annie learnt 'em; well, the oldest one, Mary Patience, she *did* know her *letters*, I guess—fourteen year old, she was; but Mandy, the youngest, had never seed inside a book afore that winter; and the way she learnt was jist su'prisin'. She was puny-like and frail-lookin' allus, but ever'body 'lowed she was a heap smarter'n Mary Patience, and she *was;* and in my opinion she railly had more sense'n all the rest o' the childern putt together, 'bout books and cipherin' and 'rethmetic, and the like; and John Wesley, the oldest of 'em, he got to teachin' at last, when he growed up,—but, law! he couldn't write his own name so's you could read it. I allus thought they was a good 'eal of old Ezry in John Wesley. Liked to romance 'round with the youngsters 'most too well.—Spiled him fer teachin', I allus thought; fer instance, ef a scholard said somepin' funny in school, John-Wes he'd jist have to have his laugh out with the rest, and it was jist fun fer the boys, you know, to go to school to *him.* Allus in fer spellin'-matches and the like, and learnin' songs and sich. I rickollect he give a' exhibition onc't, one winter, and I'll never fergit it, I rickon.

The school-house would on'y hold 'bout forty, comf'table, and that night they was up'ards of a hunderd er more—jist crammed and jammed! And the benches

was piled back so's to make room fer the flatform they'd built to make their speeches and dialogues on; and fellers a-settin' up on them back seats, their heads was clean aginst the j'ist. It was a low ceilin', anyhow, and o' course them 'at tuk a part in the doin's was way up, too. Janey Thompson had to give up her part in a dialogue, 'cause she looked so tall she was afeard the congergation would laugh at her; and they couldn't git her to come out and sing in the openin' song 'thout lettin' her set down first and git ready 'fore they pulled the curtain. You see, they had sheets sewed together, and fixed on a string some way, to slide back'ards and for'ards, don't you know. But they was a big bother to 'em—couldn't git 'em to work like. Ever' time they'd git 'em slid 'bout half-way acrost, somepin' would ketch, and they'd haf to stop and fool with 'em awhile 'fore they could git 'em the balance o' the way acrost. Well, finally, to'rds the last, they jist kep' 'em drawed back all the time. It was a pore affair, and spiled purt' nigh ever' piece; but the scholards all wanted it fixed thataway, the teacher said, in a few appropert remarks he made when the thing was over. Well, I was a-settin' in the back part o' the house on them high benches, and my head was jist even with them on the flatform, and the lights was pore, and where the string was stretched fer the curtain to

slide on it looked like the p'formers was strung on it. And when Lige Boyer's boy was a-speakin'—kindo' mumbled it, you know, and you couldn't half hear—it looked fer the world like he was a-chawin' on that-air string; and some devilish feller 'lowed ef he'd chaw it clean in two it'd be a good thing fer the balance. After that they all sung a sleigh-ridin' song, and it was right purty, the way they got it off. Had a passel o' sleigh-bells they'd ring ever' onc't-in-a-while, and it sounded purty—shore!

Then Hunicut's girl, Marindy, read a letter 'bout winter, and what fun the youngsters allus had in winter-time, a-sleighin' and the like, and spellin'-matches, and huskin'-bees, and all. Purty good, it was, and made a feller think o' old times. Well, that was about the best thing they was done that night; but ever'body said the teacher wrote it fer her; and I wouldn't be su'prised much, fer they was married not long afterwards. I expect he wrote it fer her.—Wouldn't putt it past Wes!

They had a dialogue, too, 'at was purty good. Little Bob Arnold was all fixed up—had on his pap's old bell-crowned hat, the one he was married in. Well, I jist thought die I would when I seed that old hat and called to mind the night his pap was married, and we all got him a little how-come-you-so on some left-handed cider

'at had be'n a-layin' in a whiskey-bar'l tel it was strong enough to bear up a' egg. I kin rickollect now jist how he looked in that hat, when it was all new, you know, and a-settin' on the back of his head, and his hair in his eyes; and sich hair!—as red as git-out—and his little black eyes a-shinin' like beads. Well-sir, you'd a-died to a-seed him a-dancin'. We danced all night that night, and would a-be'n a-dancin' yit, I rickon, ef the fiddler hadn't a-give out. Wash Lowry was a-fiddlin' fer us; and along to'rds three er four in the morning Wash was purty well fagged out. You see, Wash could never play fer a dance er nothin' 'thout a-drinkin' more er less, and when he got to a certain pitch you couldn't git nothin' out o' him but "Barbary Allan"; so at last he struck up on that, and jist kep' it up and *kep'* it up, and nobody couldn't git nothin' else out of him!

Now, anybody 'at ever danced knows 'at "Barbary Allan" hain't no tune to dance by, *no* way you can fix it; and, o' course, the boys seed at onc't their fun was gone ef they couldn't git him on another tune.—And they'd coax and beg and plead with him, and maybe git him started on "The Wind Blows over the Barley," and 'bout the time they'd git to knockin' it down agin purty lively, he'd go to sawin' away on "Barbary Allan"—and I'll-be-switched-to-death ef that feller didn't set there and play

hisse'f sound asleep on "Barbary Allan," and we had to wake him up afore he'd quit! Now, that's jes' the plum facts. And they wasn't a better fiddler nowheres than Wash Lowry, when he was at hisse'f. I've heerd a good many fiddlers in my day, and I never heerd one yit 'at could play my style o' fiddlin' ekal to Wash Lowry. You see, Wash didn't play none o' this-here new-fangled music—nothin' but the old tunes, you understand, "The Forkéd Deer," and "Old Fat Gal," and "Gray Eagle," and the like. Now, them's music! Used to like to hear Wash play "Gray Eagle." He could come as nigh a-makin' that old tune talk as ever you heerd! Used to think a heap o' his fiddle—and he had a good one, shore. I've heerd him say, time and time agin, 'at a five-dollar gold-piece wouldn't buy it, and I knowed him myse'f to refuse a calf fer it onc't—yes-sir, a yearland calf—and the feller offered him a double-bar'l'd pistol to boot, and blame ef he'd take it; said he'd ruther part with anything else he owned than his fiddle.—But here I am, clean out o' the furry agin! . . . Oh, yes; I was a-tellin' 'bout little Bob, with that old hat; and he had on a swaller-tail coat and a lot o' fixin's, a-actin' like he was a squire; and he had him a great long beard made out o' corn-silks, and you wouldn't a-knowed him ef it wasn't fer his voice. Well, he was a-p'tendin' he was a squire

a-tryin' some kind o' law-suit, you see; and John Wesley he was the defendunt, and Joney Wiles, I believe it was, played like he was the plaintive. And they'd had a fallin' out 'bout some land, and was a-lawin' fer p'session, you understand. Well, Bob he made out it was a mighty bad case when *John-Wes* comes to consult him 'bout it, and tells *him* ef a little p'int o' law was left out he thought he could git the land fer him. And then John-Wes *bribes* him, you understand, to leave out the p'int o' law, and the squire says he'll do all he kin, and so John-Wes goes out a-feelin' purty good. Then *Wiles* comes in to consult the squire, don't you see. And the 'squire tells *him* the same tale he told *John Wesley*. So *Wiles* bribes him to leave out the p'int o' law in *his* favor, don't you know. So when the case is tried he decides in favor o' John-Wes, a-tellin' *Wiles* some cock-and-bull story 'bout havin' to manage it thataway so's to git the case mixed so's he could git it fer him shore; and posts *him* to sue fer change of venue er somepin',—anyway, Wiles gits a new trial, and then the squire decides in *his* favor, and tells John-Wes another trial will fix it in *his* favor, and so on.—And so it goes on tel, anyway, he gits holt o' the land hisse'f and all their money besides, and leaves them to hold the bag! Well-sir, it was purty well got up; and they said it was John-Wes's doin's, and

I 'low it was—he was a good hand at anything o' that sort, and knowed how to make fun.—But I've be'n a-tellin' you purty much ever'thing but what I started out with, and I'll try and hurry through, 'cause I know you're tired.

'Long 'bout the beginnin' o' summer, things had got back to purty much the old way. The boys round was a-gittin' devilish, and o' nights 'specially they was a sight o' meanness a-goin' on. The mill-hands, most of 'em, was mixed up in it—Coke and Morris, and them 'at had jined meetin' 'long in the winter had all backslid, and was a-drinkin' and carousin' round worse'n ever.

People perdicted 'at *Bills* would backslide, but he helt on faithful, to all appearance; said he liked to see a feller when he made up his mind to do right, he liked to see him do it, and not go back on his word; and even went so fur as to tell Ezry ef they didn't putt a stop to it he'd quit the neighberhood and go somers else. And Bills was Ezry's head man then, and he couldn't a-got along 'thout him; and I b'lieve ef Bills had a-said the word old Ezry would a-turned off ever' hand he had.—He got so he jist left ever'thing to Bills. Ben Carter was turned off fer somepin', and nobody ever knowed what. Bills and him had never got along jist right sence the fight.

Ben was with this set I was a-tellin' you 'bout, and they'd got him to drinkin' and in trouble, o' course. I'd knowed Ben well enough to know he wouldn't do nothin' ornry ef he wasn't agged on, and ef he ever was mixed up in anything o' the kind Wes Morris and John Coke was at the bottom of it, and I take notice *they* wasn't turned off when Ben was.

One night the crowd was out, and Ben amongst 'em, o' course.—Sence he'd be'n turned off he'd be'n a-drinkin',—and I never blamed him much; he was so good-hearted like and easy led off, and I allus b'lieved it wasn't his own doin's.

Well, this night they cut up awful, and ef they was one fight they was a dozend; and when all the devilment was done they *could* do, they started on a stealin' expedition, and stold a lot o' chickens and tuk 'em to the mill to roast 'em; and, to make a long story short, that night the mill burnt clean to the ground. And the whole pack of 'em collogued together aginst Carter to saddle it onto him; claimed 'at they left Ben there at the mill 'bout twelve o'clock—which was a fact, fer he was dead drunk and couldn't git away. Steve stumbled over him while the mill was a-burnin' and drug him out afore he knowed what was a-goin' on, and it was all plain enough to Steve 'at Ben didn't have no hand in the firin' of it. But I'll

tell you he sobered up mighty suddent when he seed what was a-goin' on, and heerd the neighbers a-hollerin', and a-threatenin' and a-goin' on!—fer it seemed to be the ginerl idee 'at the buildin' was fired a-purpose. And says Ben to Steve, says he, "I expect I'll haf to say good-bye to you, fer they've got me in a ticklish place! I kin see through it all now, when it's too late!" And jist then Wesley Morris hollers out, "Where's Ben Carter?" and started to'rds where me and Ben and Steve was a-standin'; and Ben says, wild-like, "Don't you two fellers ever think it was *my* doin's," and whispers "Good-bye," and started off; and when we turned, Wesley Morris was a-layin' flat of his back, and we heerd Carter yell to the crowd 'at "that man"—meanin' Morris—"needed lookin' after worse than *he* did," and another minute he plunged into the river and swum acrost; and we all stood and watched him in the flickerin' light tel he clum out on t'other bank; and 'at was the last anybody ever seed o' Ben Carter!

It must a-be'n about three o'clock in the morning by this time, and the mill then was jist a-smoulderin' to ashes—fer it was as dry as tinder and burnt like a flash—and jist as a party was a-talkin' o' organizin' and follerin' Carter, we heerd a yell 'at I'll never fergit ef I'd live tel another flood. Old Ezry, it was, as white as a

corpse, and with the blood a-streamin' out of a gash in his forred, and his clothes half on, come a-rushin' into the crowd and a-hollerin' fire and murder ever' jump. "My house is a-burnin', and my folks is all a-bein' murdered whilse you're a-standin' here! And Bills done it! Bills done it!" he hollered, as he headed the crowd and started back fer home. "Bills done it! I caught him at it; and he would a-murdered me in cold blood ef it hadn't a-be'n fer his woman. He knocked me down, and had me tied to a bed-post in the kitchen afore I come to. And his woman cut me loose and told me to run fer he'p; and says I, 'Where's Bills?' and she says, 'He's after *me* by this time.' And jist then we heerd Bills holler, and we looked, and he was a-standin' out in the clearin' in front o' the house, with little Annie in his arms; and he hollered wouldn't she like to kiss the baby good-bye. And she hollered My God! fer me to save little Annie, and fainted clean dead away. And I heerd the roof a-crackin', and grabbed her up and packed her out jist in time. And when I looked up, Bills hollered out agin, and says, 'Ezry,' he says, 'you kin begin to kindo' git an idee o' what a good feller I am! And ef you hadn't a-caught me you'd a-never a-knowed it, and "*Brother Williams*" wouldn't a-be'n called away to another ap-

p'intment like he is.' And says he, 'Now, ef you foller me I'll finish you shore!—You're safe *now*, fer I hain't got time to waste on you furder.' And jist then his woman kindo' come to her senses ag'in and hollered fer little Annie, and the child heerd her and helt out its little arms to go to her, and hollered 'Mother! Mother!' And Bills says, 'Dam yer mother! ef it hadn't a-be'n fer *her* I'd a-be'n all right. And dam you, too!' he says to me.—'This'll pay you fer that lick you struck me; and fer you a-startin' reports, when I first come,'at more'n likely I'd done somepin' mean over East and come out West to reform! And I wonder ef I *didn't* do somepin' mean afore I come here?' he went on; 'kill somebody er somepin'? And I wonder ef I ain't reformed enough to go back? Good-bye, Annie!' he hollered; 'and you needn't fret about yer baby, I'll be the same indulgent father to it I've allus be'n!' And the baby was a-cryin' and a-reachin' out its little arms to'rds its mother, when Bills he turned and struck off in the dark to'rds the river."

This was about the tale 'at Ezry told us, as nigh as I can rickollect: and by the time he finished, I never want to see jist sich another crowd o' men as was a-swarmin' there. Ain't it awful when sich a crowd gits together? I tell you it makes my flesh creep to think about it!

As Bills had gone in the direction of the river, we wasn't long in makin' our minds up 'at he'd haf to cross it, and ef he done *that* he'd haf to use the boat 'at was down below the mill, er wade it at the ford, a mil'd er more down. So we divided in three sections, like—one to go and look after the folks at the house, and another to the boat, and another to the ford. And Steve and me and Ezry was in the crowd 'at struck fer the boat: and we made time a-gittin' there! It was awful dark, and the sky was a-cloudin' up, like a storm; but we wasn't long a-gittin' to the p'int where the boat was allus tied; but they wasn't no boat there! Steve kindo' tuk the lead, and we all talked in whispers. And Steve said to kindo' lay low and maybe we could hear somepin'; and some feller said he thought he heerd somepin' strange-like, but the wind was kindo' raisin' and kep' up sich a moanin' through the trees along the bank 'at we couldn't make out nothin'. "Listen!" says Steve, suddent-like, "*I* hear somepin'!" We was all still ag'in—and we all heerd a moanin' 'at was sadder'n the wind—sounded mournfuller to *me*,—'cause I knowed it in a minute, and I whispered, "Little Annie." And 'way out acrost the river we could hear the little thing a-sobbin', and we all was still's death; and we heerd a voice we knowed was Bills's say, "Dam ye! Keep still, or I'll drownd ye!"

And the wind kindo' moaned ag'in, and we could hear the trees a-screetchin' together in the dark, and the leaves a-rustlin'; and when it kindo' lulled ag'in, we heerd Bills make a kindo' splash with the oars; and jist then Steve whispered fer to lay low and be ready—he was a-goin' to riconn'itre; and he tuk his coat and shoes off, and slid over the bank and down into the worter as slick as a' eel. Then ever'thing was still ag'in, 'cept the moanin' o' the child, which kep' a-gittin' louder and louder; and then a voice whispered to us, "He's a-comin' back; the crowd below has sent scouts up, and they're on t'other side. Now watch clos't, and he's our meat." We could hear Bills, by the moanin' o' the baby, a-comin' nearder and nearder, tel suddently he made a sorto' miss-lick with the oar, I reckon, and must a-splashed the baby, fer she set up a loud cryin'; and jist then old Ezry, who was a-leanin' over the bank, kindo' lost his grip, some way o' nother, and fell kersplash in the worter like a' old chunk. "Hello!" says Bills, through the dark, "you're there, too, air ye?" as old Ezry splashed up the bank ag'in. And "Cuss you!" he says then, to the baby—"ef it hadn't be'n fer *your* infernal squawkin' I'd a-be'n all right; but you've brought the whole neighberhood out, and, dam you, I'll jist let you swim out to 'em!" And we heerd a splash, then a kindo' gurglin', and then

Steve's voice a-hollerin', "Close in on him, boys; I've got the baby!" And about a dozent of us bobbed off the bank like so many bull-frogs, and I'll tell you the worter b'iled! We could jist make out the shape o' the boat, and Bills a-standin' with a' oar drawed back to smash the first head 'at come in range. It was a mean place to git at him. We knowed he was despert, and fer a minute we kindo' helt back. Fifteen foot o' worter's a mighty onhandy place to git hit over the head in! And Bills says, "You hain't afeard, I rickon—twenty men ag'in one!" "You'd better give yourse'f up!" hollered Ezry from the shore. "No, Brother Sturgiss," says Bills, "I can't say 'at I'm at all anxious 'bout bein' borned ag'in, jist yit awhile," he says; "I see you kindo' 'pear to go in fer babtism; guess you'd better go home and git some dry clothes on; and, speakin' o' home, you'd ort 'o be there by all means—your house might catch afire and burn up whilse you're gone!" And jist then the boat give a suddent shove under him—some feller'd div under and tilted it—and fer a minute it throwed him off his guard, and the boys closed in. Still he had the advantage, bein' in the boat: and as fast as a feller would climb in he'd git a whack o' the oar, tel finally they got to pilin' in a little too fast fer him to manage, and he hollered then 'at we'd have to come to the bottom ef we

got him, and with that he div out o' the end o' the boat, and we lost sight of him; and I'll be blame ef he didn't give us the slip after all!

Wellsir, we watched fer him, and some o' the boys swum on down stream, expectin' he'd raise, but couldn't find hide ner hair of him; so we left the boat a-driftin' off down stream and swum ashore, a-thinkin' he'd jist drownded hisse'f a-purpose. But they was more su'prise waitin' fer us yit,—fer lo-and-behold-ye, when we got ashore they wasn't no trace o' Steve er the baby to be found. Ezry said he seed Steve when he fetched little Annie ashore, and she was all right, on'y she was purt-nigh past cryin'; and he said Steve had lapped his coat around her and give her to him to take charge of, and he got so excited over the fight he laid her down betwixt a couple o' logs and kindo' fergot about her tel the thing was over, and he went to look fer her, and she was gone. Couldn't a-be'n 'at she'd a-wundered off her-own-se'f; and it couldn't a-be'n 'at *Steve*'d take her, 'thout a-lettin' us know it. It was a mighty aggervatin' conclusion to come to, but we had to do it, and that was, *Bills* must a-got ashore unbeknownst to us and packed her off. Sich a thing wasn't hardly probable, yit it was a thing 'at *might* be; and after a-talkin' it over we had to admit 'at *that* must a-be'n the way of it. But where was *Steve?* W'y,

we argied, he'd diskivvered she was gone, and had putt out on track of her 'thout losin' time to stop and explain the thing. The next question was, what did Bills want with her ag'in?—He'd tried to drownd her onc't. We could ast questions enough, but c'rect answers was mighty skearce,and we jist concluded 'at the best thing to do was to putt out fer the ford, fer that was the nighdest place Bills could cross 'thout a boat, and ef it *was* him tuk the child, he was still on our side o' the river, o' course. So we struck out fer the ford, a-leavin' a couple o' men to search *up* the river. A drizzlin' sorto' rain had set in by this time, and with that and the darkness and the moanin' of the wind, it made 'bout as lonesome a prospect as a feller ever wants to go through ag'in.

It was jist a-gittin' a little gray-like in the morning by the time we reached the ford, but you couldn't hardly see two rods afore you fer the mist and the fog 'at had settled along the river. We looked fer tracks, but couldn't make out nothin'. Thereckly old Ezry punched me and p'inted out acrost the river. "What's that?" he whispers. Jist 'bout half-way acrost was somepin' white-like in the worter—couldn't make out what—perfeckly still it was. And I whispered back and told him I guess it wasn't nothin' but a sycamore snag. "Listen!" says he; "sycamore snags don't make no noise like that!"

And, shore enough, it was the same moanin' noise we'd heerd the baby makin' when we first got on the track. Sobbin' she was, as though nigh about dead. "Well, ef that's *Bills*," says I—"and I reckon they hain't no doubt but it is—what in the name o' all that's good and bad's the feller a-standin' there fer?" And a-creepin' clos'ter, we could make him out plainer and plainer. It *was* him; and there he stood breast-high in the worter, a-holdin' the baby on his shoulder like, and a-lookin' up stream, and a-waitin'.

"What do you make out of it?" says Ezry. "What's he waitin' fer?"

And, a-strainin' my eyes in the direction *he* was a-lookin', I seed somepin' a-movin' down the river, and a minute later I'd made out the old boat a-driftin' down stream; and then of course ever'thing was plain enough: He was waitin' fer the boat, and ef he got *that* he'd have the same advantage on us he had afore.

"Boys," says I, "he mustn't git that boat ag'in! Foller me, and don't let him git to the shore alive!" And in we plunged. He seed us, but he never budged, on'y to grab the baby by its little legs, and swing it out at arms-len'th. "Stop, there!" he hollered.—"Stop jist where ye air! Move another inch and I'll drownd this dam young-un afore yer eyes!" he says.—And he'd a-done

it. "Boys," says I, "he's got us. Don't move! This thing'll have to rest with a higher power'n our'n! Ef any of you kin *pray*," says I, "now's a good time to do it!"

Jist then the boat swung up, and Bills grabbed it and retch 'round and set the baby in it, never a-takin' his eye off o' us, though, fer a minute. "Now," says he, with a sorto' snarlin' laugh, "I've on'y got a little while to stay with you, and I want to say a few words afore I go. I want to tell you fellers, in the first place, 'at you've be'n *fooled* in me: I *hain't* a good feller—now, honest! And ef you're a little the worse fer findin' it out so late in the day, you hain't none the worse fer losin' me so soon—fer I'm a-goin' away now, and any interference with my arrangements'll on'y give you more trouble; so it's better all around to let me go peaceable and jist while I'm in the notion. I expect it'll be a disapp'intment to some o' you that my name hain't 'Williams,' but it hain't. And maybe you won't think nigh as much o' me when I tell you furder 'at I was obleeged to 'dopt the name o' 'Williams' onc't to keep from bein' strung up to a lamp-post, but sich is the facts. I was so extremely unfortunit onc't as to kill a p'tickler friend o' mine, and he forgive me with his dyin' breath, and told me to run whilse I could, and be a better man. But he'd spotted me with a' ugly mark 'at made it kindo' onhandy *to* git away, but

I did at last; and jist as I was a-gittin' reformed-like, you fellers had to kick in the traces, and I've made up my mind to hunt out a more moraler community, where they don't make sich a fuss about trifles. And havin' nothin' more to say, on'y to send *Annie* word 'at I'll still be a father to her young-un here, I'll bid you all good-bye." And with that he turned and clum in the boat—or ruther *fell* in,—fer somepin' black-like had riz up in it, with a' awful lick—my—God!—And, a minute later, boat and baggage was a-gratin' on the shore, and a crowd come thrashin' 'crost from t'other side to jine us,—and 'peared like wasn't a *second* longer tel a feller was a-swingin' by his neck to the limb of a scrub-oak, his feet clean off the ground and his legs a-jerkin' up and down like a limber-jack's.

And Steve it was a-layin' in the boat, and he'd rid a mil'd er more 'thout knowin' of it. Bills had struck and stunt him as he clum in whilse the rumpus was a-goin' on, and he'd on'y come to in time to hear Bills's farewell address to us there at the ford.

Steve tuk charge o' little Annie ag'in, and ef she'd a-be'n his own child he wouldn't a-went on more over her than he did; and said nobody but her mother would git her out o' his hands ag'in. And he was as good as his word; and ef you could a-seed him a half hour after

that, when he *did* give her to her mother—all lapped up in his coat and as drippin'-wet as a little drownded angel—it would a-made you wish't you was him to see that little woman a-caperin' round him, and a-thankin' him, and a-cryin' and a-laughin', and almost a-huggin' him, she was so tickled,—well, I thought in my soul she'd die! And Steve blushed like a girl to see her a-takin' on, and a-thankin' him, and a-cryin', and a-kissin' little Annie, and a-goin' on. And when she inquired 'bout Bills, which she did all suddent-like, with a burst o' tears, we jist didn't have the heart to tell her—on'y we said he'd crossed the river and got away. And he had!

And now comes a part o' this thing 'at'll more'n like tax you to believe it: Williams and her wasn't man and wife—and you needn't look su'prised, nuther, and I'll tell you fer why:—They was own brother and sister; and that brings me to *her* part of the story, which you'll haf to admit beats anything 'at you ever read about in books.

Her and Williams—that *wasn't* his name, like he acknowledged,hisse'f, you rickollect—ner *she* didn't want to tell his right name; and we forgive her fer that. Her and "Williams" was own brother and sister, and their parunts lived in Ohio some'ers. Their mother had be'n dead five year' and better—grieved to death over her

onnachurl brother's recklessness, which Annie hinted had broke her father up in some way, in tryin' to shield him from the law. And the secret of her bein' with him was this: She had married a man o' the name of Curtis or Custer, I don't mind which, adzackly—but no matter; she'd married a well-to-do young feller 'at her brother helt a' old grudge ag'in, she never knowed what; and, sence her marriage, her brother had went on from bad to worse, tel finally her father jist give him up and told him to go it his own way—he'd killed his *mother* and ruined *him*, and he'd jist give up all hopes! But Annie —you know how a sister is—she still clung to him and done ever'thing fer him, tel finally, one night, about three years after she was married, she got word some way that he was in trouble ag'in, and sent her husband to he'p him; and a half hour after he'd gone, her brother come in, all excited and bloody, and told her to git the baby and come with him, 'at her husband had got in a quarrel with a friend o' his and was bad hurt. And she went with him, of course, and he tuk her in a buggy, and lit out with her as tight as he could go all night; and then told her 'at *he* was the feller 'at had quarrelled with her husband, and the officers was after him, and he was obleeged to leave the country, and fer fear he hadn't made shore work o' him, he was a-takin' her along to

make shore of his gittin' his revenge; and he swore he'd kill her and the baby too ef she dared to whimper. And so it was, through a hunderd hardships he'd made his way at last to our section o' the country, givin' out 'at they was man and wife, and keepin' her from denyin' of it by threats, and promises of the time a-comin' when he'd send her home to her man ag'in in case he hadn't killed him. And so it run on tel you'd a-cried to hear her tell it, and still see her sister's love fer the feller a-breakin' out by a-declarin' how kind he was to her *at times*, and how he wasn't railly bad at heart, on'y fer his ungov'nable temper. But I couldn't he'p but notice, when she was a-tellin' of her hist'ry, what a quiet sorto' look o' satisfaction settled on the face o' Steve and the rest of 'em, don't you understand.

And now they was on'y one thing she wanted to ast, she said; and that was,—could she still make her home with us tel she could git word to her friends?—and there she broke down ag'in, not knowin', of course, whether *they* was dead er alive; fer time and time ag'in she said somepin' told her she'd never see her husband ag'in on this airth; and then the women-folks would cry with her and console her, and the boys would speak hopeful—all but Steve; some way o' nother Steve was never like hisse'f from that time on.

And so things went fer a month and better. Ever'thing had quieted down, and Ezry and a lot o' hands, and me and Steve amongst 'em, was a-workin' on the frame-work of another mill. It was purty weather, and we was all in good sperits, and it 'peared like the whole neighberhood was inter*est*ed—and they *was*, too —women-folks and ever'body. And that day Ezry's woman and amongst 'em was a-gittin' up a big dinner to fetch down to us from the house; and along about noon a spruce-lookin' young feller, with a pale face and a black beard, like, come a-ridin' by and hitched his hoss, and comin' into the crowd, said "Howdy," pleasant-like, and we all stopped work as he went on to say 'at he was on the track of a feller o' the name o' "Williams," and wanted to know ef we could give him any infermation 'bout sich a man. Told him maybe,—'at a feller bearin' that name desappeared kindo' myster'ous from our neighberhood 'bout five weeks afore that. "My God!" says he, a-turnin' paler'n ever, "am I too late? Where did he go, and was his sister and her baby with him?" Jist then I ketched sight o' the women-folks a-comin' with the baskets, and Annie with 'em, with a jug o' worter in her hand; so I spoke up quick to the stranger, and says I, "I guess 'his sister and her baby' wasn't along," says I, "but his *wife* and *baby's* some'eres here in

the neighberhood yit." And then a-watchin' him clos't, I says, suddent, a-p'intin' over his shoulder, "There his woman is now—that one with the jug, there." Well, Annie had jist stooped to lift up one o' the little girls, when the feller turned, and their eyes met. "Annie! My wife!" he says; and Annie she kindo' give a little yelp like and come a-flutterin' down in his arms; and the jug o' worter rolled clean acrost the road, and turned a somerset and knocked the cob out of its mouth and jist laid back and hollered "Good—good—good—good—good!" like as ef it knowed what was up and was jist as glad and tickled as the rest of us.

# DIALECT IN LITERATURE

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*"And the common people heard him gladly."*

Of what shall be said herein of dialect, let it be understood the term dialect referred to is of that general breadth of meaning given it to-day, namely, any speech or vernacular outside the prescribed form of good English in its present state. The present state of the English is, of course, not any one of its prior states. So first let it be remarked that it is highly probable that what may have been the best of English once may now by some be counted as a weak, inconsequent *patois*, or dialect.

To be direct, it is the object of this article to show that dialect is not a thing to be despised in any event—that its origin is oftentimes of as royal caste as that of any speech. Listening back, from the standpoint of to-day, even to the divine singing of that old classic master to whom England's late laureate refers as

". . . the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still";

or to whom Longfellow alludes, in his matchless sonnet, as

". . . the poet of the dawn, who wrote
The Canterbury Tales, and his old age
Made beautiful with song";—

Chaucer's verse to us is *now* as veritably dialect as to that old time it *was* the chastest English; and even then his materials were essentially dialect when his song was at best pitch. Again, our present dialect, of most plebeian ancestry, may none the less prove worthy. Mark the recognition of its own personal merit in the great new dictionary, where what was, in our own remembrance, the most outlandish dialect, is now good, sound, official English.

Since Literature must embrace all naturally existing materials—physical, mental, and spiritual—we have no occasion to urge its acceptance of so-called dialect, for dialect *is* in Literature, and *has* been there since the beginning of all written thought and utterance. Strictly

speaking, as well as paradoxically, all verbal expression is more or less dialectic, however grammatical. While usage establishes grammar, it no less establishes so-called dialect. Therefore we may as rightfully refer to "so-called grammar."

It is not really a question of Literature's position toward dialect that we are called upon to consider, but rather how much of Literature's valuable time shall be taken up by this dialectic country cousin. This question Literature her gracious self most amiably answers by hugging to her breast voluminous tomes, from Chaucer on to Dickens, from Dickens on to Joel Chandler Harris. And this affectionate spirit on the part of Literature, in the main, we all most feelingly indorse.

Briefly summed, it would appear that dialect means something more than mere rude form of speech and action—that it must, in some righteous and substantial way, convey to us a positive force of soul, truth, dignity, beauty, grace, purity and sweetness that may even touch us to the tenderness of tears. Yes, dialect as certainly does all this as that speech and act refined may do it, and for the same reason: it is simply, purely natural and human.

Yet the Lettered and the Unlettered powers are at swords' points; and very old and bitter foemen, too, they

are. As fairly as we can, then, let us look over the field of these contending forces and note their diverse positions: First, *the Lettered*—they who have the full advantages of refined education, training, and association —are undoubtedly as wholly out of order among *the Unlettered* as the Unlettered are out of order in the exalted presence of the Lettered. Each faction may in like aversion ignore or snub the other; but a long-suffering Providence must bear with the society of both. There may be one vague virtue demonstrated by this feud: each division will be found unwaveringly loyal to its kind, and mutually they desire no interchange of sympathy whatever.—Neither element will accept from the other any *patronizing* treatment; and, perhaps, the more especially does the *Unlettered* faction reject anything in vaguest likeness of this spirit. Of the two divisions, in graphic summary,—*one* knows the very core and centre of refined civilization, and this only; the *other* knows the outlying wilds and suburbs of civilization, and this only. Whose, therefore, is the greater knowledge, and whose the just right of any whit of self-glorification?

A curious thing, indeed, is this factional pride, as made equally manifest in both forces; in one, for instance, of the Unlettered forces: The average farmer, or countryman, knows, in reality, a far better and wider

range of diction than he permits himself to use. He restricts and abridges the vocabulary of his speech, fundamentally, for the reason that he fears offending his rural *neighbors*, to whom a choicer speech might suggest, on his part, an assumption—a spirit of conscious superiority, and therewith an implied reflection on *their* lack of intelligence and general worthiness. If there is any one text universally known and nurtured of the Unlettered masses of our common country, it is that which reads, "All men are created equal." Therefore it is a becoming thing when true gentility prefers to overlook some variations of the class who, more from lack of cultivation than out of rude intent, sometimes almost compel a positive doubt of the nice veracity of the declaration, or at least a grief at the munificent liberality of the so-bequoted statement. The somewhat bewildering position of these conflicting forces leaves us nothing further to consider, but how to make the most and best of the situation so far as Literature may be hurt or helped thereby.

Equally with the perfect English, then, dialect should have full justice done it. Then always it is worthy, and in Literature is thus welcome. The writer of dialect should as reverently venture in its use as in his chastest English. His effort in the *scholarly* and *elegant* direction

suffers no neglect—he is *schooled* in that, perhaps, he may explain. Then let him be *schooled* in *dialect* before he sets up as an expounder of it—a teacher, forsooth a master! The real master must not only know each varying light and shade of dialect expression, but he must as minutely know the inner character of the people whose native tongue it is, else his product is simply a pretence—a wilful forgery, a rank abomination. Dialect has been and is thus insulted, vilified, and degraded, now and continually; and through this outrage solely, thousands of generous-minded readers have been turned against dialect who otherwise would have loved and blessed it in its real form of crude purity and unstrained sweetness—

"Honey dripping from the comb!"

Let no impious faddist, then, assume its just interpretation. He may know everything else in the world, but not dialect, nor dialectic people, for both of which he has supreme contempt, which same, be sure, is heartily returned. Such a "superior" personage may even go among these simple country people and abide indefinitely in the midst of them, yet their more righteous contempt never for one instant permits them to be their real selves in his presence. In consequence, his most conscientious

report of them, their ways, lives, and interests, is absolutely of no importance or value in the world. He never knew them, nor will he ever know them. They are not his kind of people, any more than he is their kind of man; and *their* disappointment grieves us more than his.

The master in Literature, as in any art, is that "divinely gifted man" who does just obeisance to all living creatures, "both man and beast and bird." It is this master only who, as he writes, can sweep himself aside and leave his humble characters to do the thinking and the talking. This man it is who celebrates his performance—not himself. His work he celebrates because it is not his only, but because he feels it the conscientious reproduction of the life itself—as he has seen and known and felt it;—a representation it is of God's own script, translated and transcribed by the worshipful mind and heart and hand of genius. This virtue in all art is impartially demanded, and genius only can fully answer the demand in any art for which we claim perfection. The painter has his expression of it, with no slighting of the dialectic element; so, too, the sculptor, the musician, and the list entire. In the line of Literature and literary material, an illustration of the nice meaning and distinction of dialectic art will be found in Charles Dudley Warner's comment of George Cable's work, as far back

as 1883, referring to the author's own rendition of it from the platform. Mr. Warner says:

While the author was unfolding to his audience a life and society unfamiliar to them and entrancing them with pictures, the reality of which none doubted and the spell of which none cared to escape, it occurred to me that here was the solution of all the pother we have recently got into about the realistic and the ideal schools in fiction. In "Posson Jone," an awkward camp-meeting country preacher is the victim of a vulgar confidence game; the scenes are the street, a drinking-place, a gambling-saloon, a bull-ring, and a calaboose; there is not a "respectable" character in it. Where shall we look for a more faithful picture of low life? Where shall we find another so vividly set forth in all its sordid details? And yet see how art steps in, with the wand of genius, to make literature! Over the whole the author has cast an ideal light; over a picture that, in the hands of a bungling realist, would have been repellent he has thrown the idealizing grace that makes it one of the most charming sketches in the world. Here is nature, as nature only ought to be in literature, elevated but never departed from.

So we find dialèct, as a branch of Literature, worthy of the high attention and employment of the greatest master in letters—not the merest mountebank. Turn to Dickens, in innumerable passages of pathos: the death

of poor Jo, or that of the "Cheap John's" little daughter in her father's arms, on the foot-board of his peddling cart before the jeering of the vulgar mob; smile moistly, too, at Mr. Sleary's odd philosophies; or at the trials of Sissy Jupe; or lift and tower with indignation, giving ear to Stephen Blackpool and the stainless nobility of his cloyed utterances.

The crudeness or the homeliness of the dialectic element does not argue its unfitness in any way. Some readers seem to think so; but they are wrong, and very gravely wrong. Our own brief history as a nation, and our finding and founding and maintaining of it, left our forefathers little time indeed for the delicate cultivation of the arts and graces of refined and scholarly attainments. And there is little wonder, and great blamelessness on their part, if they lapsed in point of high mental accomplishments, seeing their attention was so absorbed by propositions looking toward the protection of their rude farm-homes, their meagre harvests, and their half-stabled cattle from the dread invasion of the Indian. Then, too, they had their mothers and their wives and little ones to protect, to clothe, to feed, and to die for in this awful line of duty, as hundreds upon hundreds did. These sad facts are here accented and detailed not so much for the sake of being tedious as to more clearly

indicate why it was that many of the truly heroic ancestry of "our best people" grew unquestionably dialect of caste—not alone in speech, but in every mental trait and personal address. It is a grievous fact for us to confront, but many of them wore apparel of the commonest, talked loudly, and doubtless said "thisaway" and "thataway," and "Watch y' doin' of?" and "Whur y' goin' at?"—using dialect even in their prayers to Him who, in His gentle mercy, listened and was pleased; and who listens verily unto this hour to all like prayers, yet pleased; yea, haply listens even to the refined rhetorical petitions of those who are *not* pleased.

There is something more at fault than the language when we turn from or flinch at it; and, as has been intimated, the wretched fault may be skulkingly hidden away in the ambush of *ostensible* dialect—that type of dialect so copiously produced by its sole manufacturers, who, utterly stark and bare of the vaguest idea of country life or country people, at once assume that all their "gifted pens" have to do is to stupidly misspell every word; vulgarly mistreat and besloven every theme, however sacred; maim, cripple, and disfigure language never in the vocabulary of the countryman — then smuggle these monstrosities of either rhyme or prose somehow into the public print that is to innocently

smear them broadcast all over the face of the country they insult.

How different the mind and method of the true interpreter. As this phrase goes down the man himself arises—the type perfect—Colonel Richard Malcolm Johnston, who wrote "The Dukesborough Tales"—an accomplished classic scholar and teacher, yet no less an accomplished master and lover of his native dialect of middle Georgia. He, like Dickens, permits his rustic characters to think, talk, act, and live, just as nature designed them. He does not make the pitiable error of either patronizing or making fun of them. He knows them and he loves them; and they know and love him in return. Recalling Colonel Johnston's dialectic sketches, with his own presentation of them from the platform, the writer notes a fact that seems singularly to obtain among all true dialect-writers, namely, that they are also endowed with native histrionic capabilities: *Hear*, as well as read, Twain, Cable, Johnston, Page, Smith, and all the list, with barely an exception.

Did space permit, no better illustration of true dialect sketch and characterization might here be offered than Colonel Johnston's simple story of "Mr. Absalom Billingslea," or the short and simple annals of his like quaint contemporaries, "Mr. Bill Williams" and "Mr. Jonas

Lively." The scene is the country and the very little country town, with landscape, atmosphere, simplicity, circumstance—all surroundings and conditions—*veritable*—everything rural and dialectic, no less than the simple, primitive, common, wholesome-hearted men and women who so naturally live and have their blessed being in his stories, just as in the life itself. This is the manifest work of the true dialect writer and expounder. In every detail, the most minute, such work reveals the master-hand and heart of the humanitarian as well as artist—the two are indissolubly fused—and the result of such just treatment of whatever lowly themes or characters we can but love and loyally approve with all our human hearts. Such masters necessarily are rare, and such ripe perfecting as is here attained may be in part the mellowing result of age and long observation, though it can but be based upon the wisest, purest spirit of the man as well as artist.

In no less excellence should the work of Joel Chandler Harris be regarded: His touch alike is ever reverential. He has gathered up the bruised and broken voices and the legends of the slave, and from his child-heart he has affectionately yielded them to us in all their eerie beauty and wild loveliness. Through them we are made to glorify the helpless and the weak and to revel in their

victories. But, better, we are taught that even in barbaric breasts there dwells inherently the sense of right above wrong—equity above law—and the One Unerring Righteousness Eternal. With equal truth and strength, too, Mr. Harris has treated the dialectic elements of the interior Georgia country—the wilds and fastnesses of the "moonshiners." His tale of "Teague Poteet," of some years ago, was contemporaneous with the list of striking mountain stories from that strong and highly gifted Tennesseean, Miss Murfree, or "Charles Egbert Craddock." In the dialectic spirit her stories charm and hold us. Always there is strangely mingled, but most naturally, the gentle nature cropping out amid the most desperate and stoical: the night scene in the isolated mountain cabin, guarded ever without and within from any chance down-swooping of the minions of the red-eyed law; the great man-group of gentle giants, with rifles never out of arm's-reach, in tender rivalry ranged admiringly around the crowing, wakeful little boy-baby; the return, at last, of the belated mistress of the house—the sister, to whom all do great, awkward reverence. Jealously snatching up the babe and kissing it, she querulously demands why he has not long ago been put to bed. "He 'lowed he wouldn't go," is the reply.

Thomas Nelson Page, of Virginia, who wrote "Meh

Lady"—a positive classic in the Negro dialect: his work is veritable—strong and pure and sweet; and as an oral reader of it the doubly gifted author, in voice and cadence, natural utterance, every possible effect of speech and tone, is doubtless without rival anywhere.

Many more, indeed, than may be mentioned now there are of these real benefactors and preservers of the wayside characters, times, and customs of our ever-shifting history. Needless is it to speak here of the earlier of our workers in the dialectic line—of James Russell Lowell's New England "Hosea Biglow," Dr. Eggleston's "Hoosier School-Master," or the very rare and quaint, bright prattle of "Helen's Babies." In connection with this last let us very seriously inquire what this *real* child has done that Literature should so persistently refuse to give him an abiding welcome? Since for ages this question seems to have been left unasked, it may be timely now to propound it. Why not the real child in Literature? The real child is good enough (we all know he is bad enough) to command our admiring attention and most lively interest in real life, and just as we find him "in the raw." Then why do we deny him any righteous place of recognition in our Literature? From the immemorial advent of our dear old Mother Goose, Literature has been especially catering to the

juvenile needs and desires, and yet steadfastly overlooking, all the time, the very principles upon which Nature herself founds and presents this lawless little brood of hers—the children. It is not the children who are out of order; it is Literature. And not only is Literature out of order, but she is presumptuous; she is impudent. She takes Nature's children and revises and corrects them till "their own mother doesn't know them." This is literal fact. So, very many of us are coming to inquire, as we've a right, why is the real child excluded from a just hearing in the world of letters as he has in the world of fact? For instance, what has the lovely little ragamuffin ever done of sufficient guilt to eternally consign him to the monstrous penalty of speaking most accurate grammar all the literary hours of the days of the years of his otherwise natural life?—

"Oh, mother, may I go to school
With brother Charles to-day?
The air is very fine and cool;
Oh, mother, say I may!"

—Is this a real boy that would make such a request, and is it the real language he would use? No, we are glad to say that it is not. Simply it is a libel, in every particular, on any boy, however fondly and exactingly

trained by parents however zealous for his overdecorous future. Better, indeed, the dubious sentiment of the most trivial nursery jingle, since the latter at least maintains the lawless though wholesome spirit of the child-genuine.—

"Hink! Minx! The old witch winks—
The fat begins to fry;
There's nobody home but Jumping Joan,
Father and mother and I."

Though even here the impious poet leaves the scar of grammatical knowledge upon childhood's native diction; and so the helpless little fellow is again misrepresented, and his character, to all intents and purposes, is assaulted and maligned outrageously thereby.

Now, in all seriousness, this situation ought not to be permitted to exist, though to change it seems an almost insurmountable task. The general public, very probably, is not aware of the real gravity of the position of the case as even unto this day it exists. Let the public try, then, to contribute the real child to the so-called Child Literature of its country, and have its real child returned as promptly as it dare show its little tousled head in the presence of that scholarly and dignified institution. Then ask why your real child has been spanked back home again, and the wise mentors there

will virtually tell you that Child Literature wants no real children in it, that the real child's example of defective grammar and lack of elegant deportment would furnish to its little patrician patrons suggestions very hurtful indeed to their higher morals, tendencies, and ambitions. Then, although the general public couldn't for the life of it see why or how, and might even be reminded that *it* was just such a rowdying child itself, and that its *father*—the Father of his Country—was just such a child; that Abraham Lincoln was just such a lovable, lawless child, and yet was blessed and chosen in the end for the highest service man may ever render unto man,—all—all this argument would avail not in the least, since the elegantly minded purveyors of Child Literature cannot possibly tolerate the presence of any but the refined children—the very proper children—the studiously thoughtful, poetic children;—and these must be kept safe from the contaminating touch of our rough-and-tumble little fellows in "hodden gray," with frowzly heads, begrimed but laughing faces, and such awful, awful vulgarities of naturalness, and crimes of simplicity, and brazen faith and trust, and love of life and everybody in it. All other real people are getting into Literature; and without some real children along will they not soon be getting lonesome, too?

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